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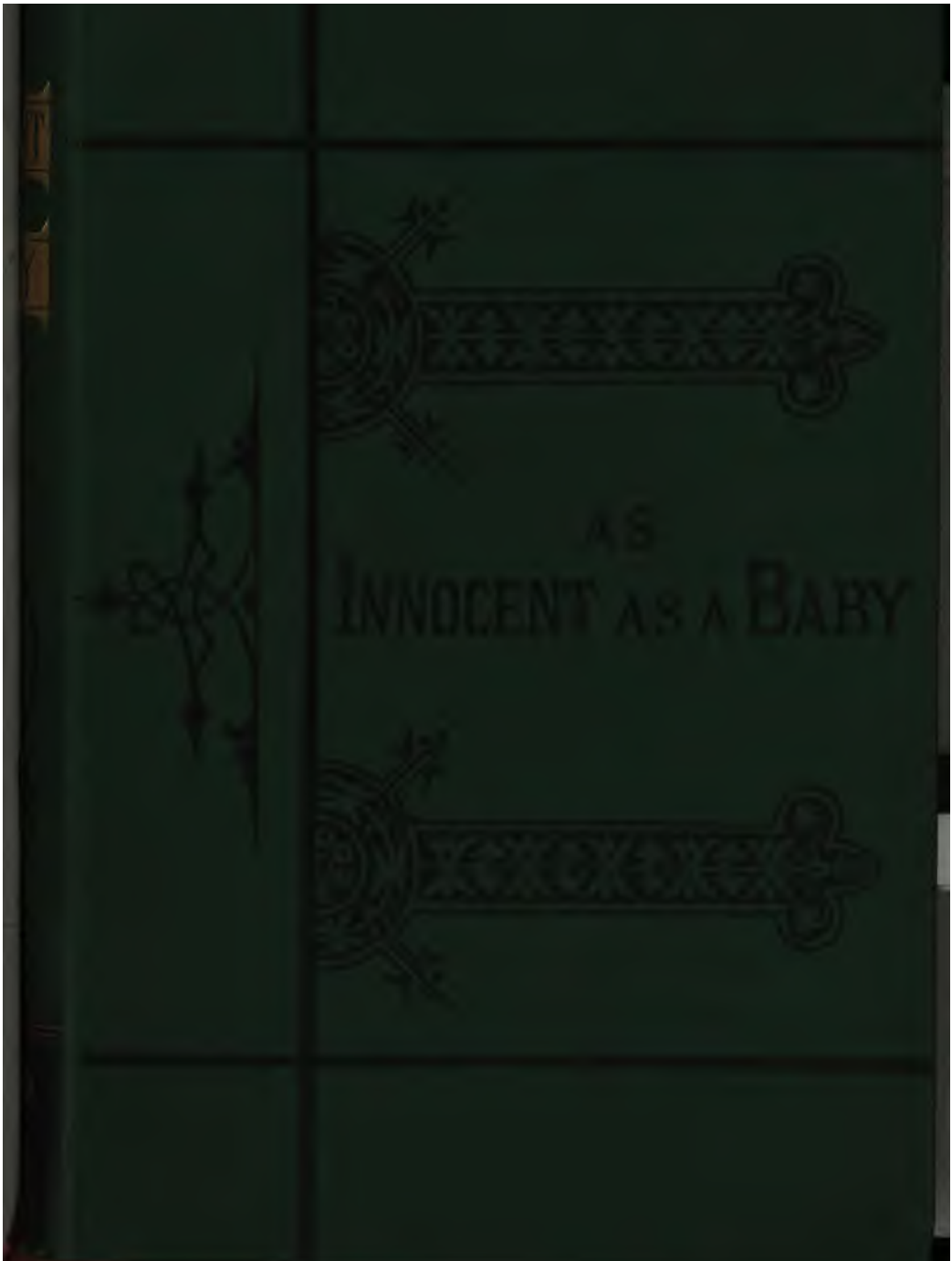
AS
INNOCENT AS A BABY

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AS INNOCENT AS A BABY.

A Novel.

". . . As we jog on, either laugh with me, or at me, or, in short, do anything,—only keep your temper."

TRISTRAM SHANDY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
1874.

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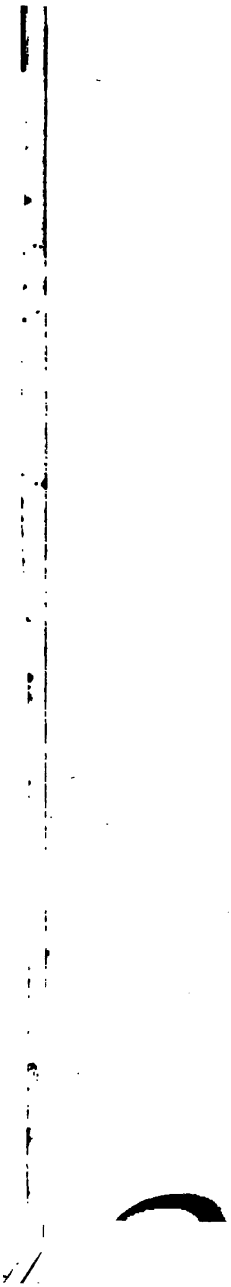

AS INNOCENT AS A BABY.

CHAPTER I.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSE.

THE weather remained very fine, which is a convincing proof that Nature does not sympathize with the human temper, or, out of respect for Mr. Andrews, she could hardly have done less than hailed, rained, blown, and occasionally thundered for several days after Mr. Lockfield had disappointed his hope of seeing Jessie.

He made the clergyman feel very uncomfortable and hot by the strong words he

used when he called upon him in the evening, after staying at home all the afternoon in a full suit of pomade and jewellery, expecting Mrs. Lovel and her niece.

What pleasure, he wanted to know, could Mr. Lockfield take in making a fool of a fellow? Why couldn't Mr. Lockfield have sent a note to Springfield House to say that Mrs. Lovel wasn't coming?

"I thought you would understand that she wouldn't call if we didn't arrive before four," says Mr. Lockfield.

"How could I tell what hour they meant to call at? You ought to have kept your promise."

"I did my best, sir. Could I take Mrs. Lovel by the scruff of her neck and compel her to walk?"

"You should have told her that I expected her. That would have made her come, because she would conclude that my sister was prepared to see her."

The clergyman expostulated: but Mr. Andrews was too disappointed to reason. He talked himself into a passion, said several rude things, for some of which he begged pardon, but instantly after said several more rude things, declared that if it was Mrs. Lovel's intention to make a fool of him, he'd let her find out that he was not the man she took him for, and, after expressing the sanguinary and atrocious wish that all old women who wore spectacles and possessed independent minds could be chucked into the sea, flung himself out of the house, leaving Mr. Lockfield panting with unaffected indignation, and lamenting the shameful neglect practised by the Church of England towards men of worth which prevented him from becoming a bishop and stifling his rectorial memories in profit and purple.

However, he and his young patron met next day and made the quarrel up.

Andrews expressed his contrition and talked of Jessie. Mr. Lockfield was not a man to harbour resentment. He affably accepted Mr. Andrews' apology and, with a great laugh for so small a man, assured him that no person in his senses could ever feel affronted by anything a friend said the throes and anguish of love.

Meanwhile Jessie, wholly unconscious of the effect her eyes and complexion had produced, had found a companion and a pastime in her goat. All through the week Mr. Andrews hung about hoping to meet her: on the cliffs, in the High Street, on the sands. But she was never to be seen, for the very good reason that she very seldom left the house, having found abundant occupation in watching a carpenter build Bijou a hut, and working in the garden. Now and then she took a walk: but as Bijou accompanied her she chose the unfrequented regions that lay on the right

of Mrs. Lovel's home, where Mr. Andrews of course did not think to seek her. She was perfectly content now that she had her goat. Mrs. Lovel wondered to herself how a big girl like that could find pleasure in watching the capers, in feeding, caressing, and making a playmate of a little shaggy animal with budding black horns; but on the whole was well content to find her niece so innocent-hearted, and so easily pleased.

"Other girls," thought she, "would be reading poetry and pining for young men." Certainly a goat was a safer companion than a young man; and, in the old lady's opinion, decidedly more interesting.

The country people coming along the road from Miching to Sandhaven would stare when they met the bright-haired girl followed by a Nanny which trotted at her heels as docilely as a pug. Many a bow-legged gentleman in a smock, many a smug market-woman freighted with baskets,

turned when she had passed and look after her with bovine eyes and probably with inward misgivings that they had missed their way and gotten into a strange land.

It was no notion that her goat might cause her to be stared at if she entered the town that kept her out of the streets, but her aunt's express command that she should hide herself when with the animal out of sight, for nothing was more odious to the old lady than the idea that her niece should do anything to render her an object of interest and discussion. One thing was certain—perhaps Mrs. Lovel knew it: that notwithstanding the people of Sandhaven were an eminently pious, Sunday-keeping, solid, respectable, and virtuous community, they would infallibly have put harsh constructions on Jessie and her goat; have assured one another that the young lady was a mere Frenchified coquette, whose ambition it was to make herself conspicuous by letting the

world see what a pretty innocent little dear it was to be so fond of a goat! Do you doubt this? Come, then, come unto these yellow sands, come to these green meadows, come to any little town, whether by the sea-shore or among the fields, and judge for yourself. Select your character—if it be a young lady so shall your curiosity be better gratified—and listen to what shall be said of her. That gentleman there who pulled his hat off so politely to her, take him aside and talk of her; mention her name to that lady who has just passed her with the friendliest of smiles. Out with your pocket-book and make your notes. You shall then judge how innocence is interpreted in small English towns; how your, or my, or anybody's young lady shall not be able to cross the street without some kind friend scraping up his little piece of mud and throwing it at her from behind.

Ah, surely the Christian kindness, the

generous constructions, the sincere friendships, the manly horror of scandal, that dignify the character and exalt the language of our provincial populations, demand the noblest tribute that eloquence has at her command. Is it some disappointed doctor who starts that lie? some unpaid linendraper who hints that scandal? some bosom friend who drops that poison? No matter; life is full of compensations. The doctor shall hear every day of the people he has killed, of the maladies he has mistaken, of the gossip that drove him out of the last town he practised in. The linendraper shall remain unpaid. And the family friend shall be dismissed from the tea table or the card party with the sweetest goodbyes, to make way for the cloud of abuse that instantly follows her departure.

"My dear, there is no wind and the sky is clear. I will walk with you to Spring-

field House this afternoon, for I think it is now time that we returned Mr. Andrews' call."

So spoke Mrs. Lovel to Jessie eight days after Mr. Lockfield's young patron had made his first visit.

"Very well," said Jessie; and shortly after dinner they left the house.

Jessie in a black cloth jacket (her aunt's gift) and a hat she herself had trimmed; with her bright hair, her blue eyes, her soft cheeks tinted by the keen and breezeless air, looked a very great deal more English than her aunt, whose face showed with somewhat of a yellow aspect through her veil, and whose large antiquated bonnet might have been as safely appropriated to the French as to the Laplanders, since there was, probably, no living milliner who could have told you where it was made and when.

They walked pretty briskly, and some

time within half an hour reached the gate of the estate. Mrs. Lovel pulled a bell and out of the porter's lodge came a man who swung the gate open and admitted them. They had to traverse a long carriage-drive before they got to the house. Mrs. Lovel seemed somewhat subdued as she knocked.

The building, though it consisted only of three storeys, was long, and suggested a spacious interior. There was a fine lawn in front; but the estate was rendered barren-looking by the absence of wood. A footman opened the door: a man in a red waistcoat and claret-coloured coat and gold buttons.

Mr. and Miss Andrews were at home. The ladies were ushered into the drawing-room and there left.

Mrs. Lovel threw up her veil and looked about her. There was so much to excite her admiration that she could find no leisure for comment. What noble-looking

glasses! What a splendid clock! What lovely curtains! Where do you see such curtains nowadays? Look at that centre table and observe how the legs are carved! Remark those noble statuettes! How fragrant, how summer-like the atmosphere! Mrs. Lovel was just about asking Jessie how she imagined Mr. Andrews contrived to produce that delightful June-like aroma in February, when he entered the room.

Never did human being look more pleased than Mr. Andrews as he shook hands with the ladies. It was a grand thing for him to be permitted to do the honours in his own house to a girl he was prepared to fall on his knees before and worship. He could not have credited that he was so absurdly in love with her before he had taken her hand and looked into her sweet eyes and thanked her for coming to see him. Even Mrs. Lovel could not forbear smiling out of sympathy with the deep-set grin that gave

a manly prominence to his cheek bones, and brought the parting of his hair a quarter of an inch nearer to his eyebrows.

"Really, Mr. Andrews," says she, "you have a very delightful house. Pray where are the flowers that make this room so fragrant?"

"I don't know," he replies looking round him with his wonderful smile crumpling his face into a great number of deformities. "I think the smell is peculiar to this room;" and he turns his eyes on Jessie with an expression in them that ought to convince her no earthly power would have saved her from a compliment if her aunt hadn't been there.

"How you can prefer living in London to occupying such a house as this surprises me!" remarks Mrs. Lovel blandly. "But you find Sandhaven dull?"

He longs to look earnestly at Jessie and say, "It *was* dull;" but as it is Mrs. Lovel

who asks the question he is obliged to look at her—so he answers:

"I know a good many people in London, but here I am lost. What society is there? what amusements?"

"But doesn't Miss Andrews find it very dull when you are away?" inquires Jessie.

"Girls have many amusements that men can't make. They can sew, and read, and look after the servants, and play the piano, and do a heap of things. But how is a fellow to amuse himself who isn't in business or in the House? who hasn't any occupation?"

"He should find an occupation," says Mrs. Lovel mildly but firmly, "for Satan finds," and she drones out the time-honoured couplet.

Mr. Andrews rather wishes that the Gentleman referred to in the rhyme would carry her out of the room. He would give a good deal to be alone with Jessie; but

there sits the old woman glaring, watchful, obnoxious.

"How is Miss Andrews?" asks Jessie, who has an odd notion that the lady is a hunchback, with one leg shorter than the other, sore eyes which prevent her from reading, and red hair mangled into ringlets. Don't you often have the most fanciful conception of the appearance of an individual whose relations you know, whom you hear talked about and never see?

"She rarely leaves her room. She is upstairs now. Would you like to see her?"

"We shall be very pleased," says Mrs. Lovel.

So Mr. Andrews—not unwillingly, for he means that his sister shall detain Mrs. Lovel and leave him to show Miss Marchmont over his estate—leads the way into a fine hall and up a broad flight of stairs charmingly illuminated on the first landing by a handsome window of stained glass,

and stops before a door, on which he raps, then turns the handle.

Mrs. Lovel is somewhat surprised to find herself admitted into a large bed-room fitted like a sitting-room. A great four-poster stands in a corner; on one side of the mantelpiece is a book-case filled with volumes. The room has a most comfortable aspect, with its cheerful fire and warm carpet and pleasant window-curtains. Close against a circular table on which are books, writing materials, a drawing-board, &c., is a sofa, whereon a lady is lying. She looks towards the door as the party enter, and, not without effort, sits up. Mr. Andrews introduces her to the ladies as his sister Bessie. She apologises to them for not rising, extends her hand and smiles very pleasantly at Jessie as if it gives her pleasure to see so pretty a thing in her sick-room. Her smile throws a light over her face and reveals an expression entirely sweet.

She is quite unlike her brother. Her eyes are brown and soft: her forehead square and intelligent; but her complexion is wax-coloured by her long confinement; the hollows under her eyes are dark; you may judge the fragility of her body by her wrist which a baby's fingers might span.

She makes Jessie and Mrs. Lovel bring chairs close to the sofa and converses with them, while Mr. Andrews lolls against the mantelpiece and watches Miss Marchmont. Bessie has often heard of Mrs. Lovel's goodness to the poor, and is glad to know her. On the other hand, Mrs. Lovel is no stranger to Bessie's benevolence of heart. So the acquaintance starts with excellent promise. A great number of the poor of Sandhaven are known to them both; Bessie says that Tom Martin's eldest boy has run away, and Mrs. Lovel assures her that she has often had misgivings about that youth's future. Old Goody Dicks is

now fairly bed-ridden and very poor; yes, but she is not so grateful as others: for Mrs. Lovel sent her a piece of salt pork, some potatoes, and two hundreds of coal the week before by her servant; and Goody murmured because some money hadn't been sent with the provisions to enable her to buy snuff.

So the two ladies relate their experiences and make their comments; Bessie, who is very ladylike in her manner, taking care to include Jessie in the conversation by getting her opinion of Sandhaven and ascertaining how the good work of charity is carried on at La Force; until Mr. Andrews, who is growing sick of Mrs. Dicks and her snuff, and John Ploughman and his friend the pawnbroker, and the family of twelve in one room in Dirt Street, says boldly to Jessie:

"Let me show you over the grounds, Miss Marchmont, while Mrs. Lovel rests herself."

"I shall be very pleased," answers Jessie, who would far rather remain where she is, but who is too amiable to refuse to gratify anybody's wishes. She leaves her chair and follows Mr. Andrews out of the room, while Mrs. Lovel stays with Bessie and talks of St. Michael's and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Now pretty well as much of the grounds could be seen from a back window as by walking over them, for there were very few trees to hide the prospect, and the land was level. However, there was a good sized farmyard to be seen, and the stables, and a very long hot-house, and the two carriages. Mr. Andrews was too much overpowered at first by the delight he experienced in being alone with Jessie to be more than extraordinarily polite. She admired everything. The farmyard made her enthusiastic. What dear little hens! She was so fond of hens! she would keep

them if she thought her aunt wouldn't object.

"If you should ever have an idea of starting a farmyard," says Mr. Andrews, "let me stock it, will you?"

"Oh, you are very kind, Mr. Andrews."

"I'm not kind. You won't let me be kind. At least, I should say your aunt won't let me. See, there are the stables. Come and look at the horse I wanted to lend you."

It was a little chestnut, and a very pretty animal indeed. Jessie went boldly into the stall, stroked his nose, and patted his neck.

"Chambers," called Mr. Andrews to a man who was hissing over some harness, like a gander at a boy, "bring Jacobin out and walk him. I want Miss Marchmont to see his action."

The sunshine improved the horse's glossy coat and made him look a real beauty as

he followed Chambers around the yard. Jessie watched him with ardent longings. What would she have given to spring upon his back and gallop across those fields yonder.

"That will do, Chambers. Isn't it hard, Miss Marchmont, that your aunt won't let me lend you this horse?"

"She thinks we haven't known you long enough to accept your kindness," says Jessie shyly, for there is an expression in the young man's eyes that makes her uneasy; though she does not understand it.

"It is not my fault if we are not wel acquainted," says Mr. Andrews. "I should presume more if I dared. I'd ask you to accept that horse as a gift."

"But I couldn't—I wouldn't take it. You are too generous. If you give your things away like that you will soon have nothing left for yourself."

"But I would only give to *you*."

This emphasis brings the colour into her cheeks, sets her heart beating, and makes her long to get back to her aunt. She understands the truth now. What a revelation to her innocent spirit! She can't but feel flattered; the admiration of the ugliest man in the world is flattery to a woman, let her hate him as she will; but she is also distressed, annoyed, subdued, and abhors the necessity of her speech, for she doesn't want him to see how frightened she is. He remarks her confusion, and is afraid he has said too much. He hopes to heaven that Bessie is fascinating Mrs. Lovel, for he finds something exquisitely childish in Jessie's character, and feels that if he do not get Mrs. Lovel as an ally he will have to plead his love to deaf ears.

They walk a little way down the grounds in silence, and then Jessie stops and

says she had better be returning to her aunt.

"Perhaps so," says Mr. Andrews, and they turn towards the house.

"I hope," Mr. Andrews remarks, "I haven't offended you?"

"Indeed not. I should be very foolish to be offended with such kindness as you wish to do me."

And then anxious to drop the subject, she talks of Bessie, and how long she has been an invalid, and who her doctors are. He wants her to see the library before they go upstairs, and takes her into a handsome room filled with pictures, some of which are very fine. It is perfectly natural and perfectly fair that he should summon his auxiliaries to help his passion; and why should he doubt that his possessions should make her impressible and him lovely in her eyes? Do older and wiser men doubt this? Sir John, *ætat* seventy,

nut-brown wig, false teeth, stuffed calves, red-brick complexion, gout in left hand, writes love-letters on scrip, pledges his constancy in East Indian securities, and is made young, handsome, and irresistible, by the Three-and-a-half per Cents. If real estate can't say a great deal in favour of a man's love, if pictures are dumb, plate silent, and tables and chairs unsuggestive on that subject, how would the editor of the "Times'" advertisements be able to make out that second list in the long catalogue on his front page which ladies read with scarcely less eagerness than the decisions of the—Probate Court?

Andrews had no sooner taken Jessie back to her aunt than he felt profoundly annoyed that he had not kept her longer to himself. But it was his own fault. He had frightened her by the fit of generosity that had convulsed him. What a fool he was (he thought) to offer a young lady to whom he

had not given as yet one hint of the passion that was devouring his heart, a horse. An ass, goose! But for that horse, he might have still been walking with her in the grounds, pointing out the site of summer cabbages, and the great onion-beds in the west, with many a dainty allusion to violets and blue eyes, to pearly teeth and snowdrops, to sunflowers and yellow hair, gently insinuating himself into her sensibility, softly sliding into her heart, lubricating the road with unctious compliments, not, great heaven! leaping into her affection on horseback, taking her love as though it were a five-barred gate, and quashing emotion by ponderous generosity.

She on the other hand was as glad to be with her aunt as he was annoyed with himself for taking her to her. Bessie asked her what she thought of the grounds; of course Jessie was charmed.

Bessie said that she had been enjoying a delightful conversation with Mrs. Lovel; and, addressing the old lady, begged that she would often come to see her. Mrs. Lovel looked flattered. Evidently the subjects they had been discussing were to her taste; had there been any difference of opinion her spectacles would not have beamed so placidly.

"Won't you come and take a friendly dinner with us some day this week?" asked Bessie.

"Why, you are very obliging, Miss Andrews—"

"Come next Thursday," cried Andrews, who had not the courage to say—as he longed to say—"to-morrow."

Mrs. Lovel looked at Jessie. She would have declined for herself, under the plea that late dinners disagreed with her; but Bessie had put her into a very good temper; Jessie had little amusement, and it

was but fair that Mrs. Lovel should now and then sacrifice herself for her niece; besides, the Andrewses were very hospitable, and Bessie manifestly a sincere Christian. The invitation was thereupon accepted, and the dinner hour, to suit Mrs. Lovel's convenience, fixed for five.

Andrews insisted upon accompanying the ladies as far as St. Michael's church.

"We are well able to take care of ourselves," said Mrs. Lovel graciously; but Mr. Andrews told her that the road was lonely, that it was just possible she might meet a quarrelsome beggar, and succeeded at last in making the old lady consider that his escort was absolutely essential to her security. He was very polite to her, walked at her side, expressed himself deeply gratified that she should find so much to like in his sister, thanked her for her visit, and begged her not to be at the trouble to order a fly for Thursday, as his

carriage should fetch and convey them home.

"I cannot deny," said Mrs. Lovel after he had left them, "that Mr. Andrews improves greatly on acquaintance. I only wish he would be a little less profuse in his offers—I never could have conceived any man so overwhelming."

Jessie wondered whether it was her duty to tell her that Mr. Andrews had wanted to make her a present of a horse; but thought it best to keep quiet.

"His house," continued the old lady, "is very fine. The drawing-room is truly noble, and exhibits first-rate taste in its furniture. Old Mr. Andrews was always fond of art they used to say; but I had no idea his judgment was so sound."

"I am sorry for poor Miss Andrews; she looks a confirmed invalid."

"She suffers from a spinal complaint—a sad affliction. She talks very rationally,

and possesses a truly enlightened mind. So excellent a young woman ought to serve as a guarantee that her brother has virtues. She is only twenty-five, but looks ten years older than that."

"She has soft, pensive eyes. How sad the expression of her face is when she is not talking."

"Yes, my dear, her own sufferings have taught her to feel for others. See how God's holy providence works in her life; He gives her abundance and then smites her, that the poor, and desolate, and oppressed may find a benefactress who will weep with them and comfort them, God bless her!"

"But you also, aunt, have done a great deal of good among the poor."

"My child, I did what I could. It is our first and greatest duty to succour those who are in want. Charity is indeed the very holiest of the virtues; for all the

virtues spring from it. Oh, Jessie, always be good, my dear, always be good. See now what an old woman I am. Soon you will be as old as I—for time flies with dreadful speed. Then think of the satisfaction you will feel in being able to look back upon the past and behold nothing there to cause you shame or remorse. If Bessie Andrews lives to be an old woman this, I believe, will be her reward; for she and such as she—and there are many like her, Jessie, be sure of that—worship God truly, not only with their lips but with their souls; for piety does not lie in prayer alone, but in raising the fallen and feeding the hungry."

Never had Jessie remembered her aunt so thoughtful in her manner, so gentle in her speech.

"Auntie," she whispered softly, "I have no other wish than to be good. I hope to meet my father and mother again."

"And me, my child. Pray for me."

"I always do."

Mrs. Lovel passed her arm through her niece's, and for some time they walked in silence. Presently the old lady said:

"They are going to have a visitor at Springfield House: a cousin on the mother's side."

"I remember Mr. Andrews mentioned that a cousin of his was returning from India on sick leave."

"On sick leave! then there will be two invalids. . . . What did Mr. Andrews talk to you about in the garden?"

"He showed me the farmyard and stables, that was all," answered Jessie, colouring a little. And she added with a smile, "He wanted to give me some of his hens because I told him I was fond of them."

This statement was a compromise with her conscience. Having mentioned the hens she felt she had done her duty.

"What a *giving* young man to be sure! But it is a fault on the right side. Generosity seldom becomes a vice—but meanness in any degree is criminal."

Here they reached the house, and the walk was over.

Not a word about Mr. Andrews, you will observe. Not a hint as to the reason of this *givingness* of disposition. Do you think Mrs. Lovel hadn't her suspicions—nay, call it her certainties? Pray value her sagacity more highly. Even if Mr. Lockfield had not spoken to her, she would have guessed very shrewdly. Of course she saw that Mr. Andrews was smitten with Jessie; that all this anxiety to get her to call was for Jessie; that his invitation to dinner was for Jessie. The old lady had not, I sincerely believe, one spark of vanity. The most consummate flatterer might have angled in her heart with compliments the prettiest, the airiest, the gau-

diest, for twenty years, and never have had a bite. Look how she dressed! As her mother did, and had no more idea what the current fashions were than what becomes of the flies in winter. Mr. Andrews could not deceive her. She saw everything—knew all about it—understood what it meant—but held her tongue. She had no opinion of marriage. She thought that state a poor look-out for women. Saints, confessors, martyrs, had pronounced against it—and they ought to know what was right. Only the other day she was reading the judicious Hooker's Life, and was acidulated for several hours after hearing Walton tell how Hooker had to rock the baby's cradle when he might have been edifying his visitors, and lay the cloth instead of writing his sermons, whilst the ugly termagant, that match-making Mrs. Churchman had mated him with, cooked the dinner and beshrew'd him from the kitchen. No,

she was not going to tell Jessie that Andrews was her lover; for wouldn't that set the child a-thinking, make her sentimental, and end by sending her to join the great and lamentable encampment of Kedar?

CHAPTER II.

AN ARGUMENT.

MR. LOCKFIELD happening to meet his patron on the day following Mrs. Lovel's visit, heard that his old friend and her niece had called at Springfield House, and that they were going to dine there on Thursday.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the clergyman; and then looking slyly at Andrews, he said, "When am I to congratulate you?"

"Oh, there is time enough," answered Andrews with a shrug, but plainly relishing his little friend's humour. "But I can

assure you that I am very much in love with her."

"They were both delighted with Springfield House of course."

"Miss Marchmont was. Bessie has taken a great fancy to them both. She calls Mrs. Lovel a delightful old woman! Did you ever know two relations with such opposite tastes? The more I see of Mrs. Lovel the less I like her. But that's between ourselves, Lockfield."

"She will improve. You'll think better of her. Mark my words."

"You'll join us on Thursday, will you? Five o'clock sharp, as the old woman's digestion is feeble, and a seven o'clock dinner would make her mad with nightmares."

Mr. Lockfield felt himself a much smaller man even than he was, to stand by and hear Mrs. Lovel spoken of so derisively without a frown or a protest. However he

said nothing, but pretended to consider awhile, lest he might have an engagement on Thursday; and discovering himself to be at leisure on that day, accepted Andrews's invitation.

"Isn't it a confounded nuisance that my cousin Robert is coming? A month ago he would have been welcome, but now he'll be in the way."

"Is he young or old?"

"My age exactly. We were together at Eton. His father died and left his mother hard-up. She married again and went out to India. Bob was shot in the arm somewhere by a native and ordered to Europe. Of course, he's welcome at my house, but I'd rather be alone just now myself."

"Give him a gun, a horse, and some fishing-tackle. He'll amuse himself and leave you plenty of time to—ahem."

And with a wave of the hand and a

smile so rosy that it seemed sultry, the little man strutted away.

He was anxious to hear what Mrs. Lovel had to say about the Andrewses, and as he was near the lane he thought he would step in and see the old lady. It was just likely that Jessie was out; in which case he could converse as he pleased. On reaching the gate he met Jessie leaving the house with her goat. He shook hands with her heartily, and thought to himself that she grew prettier every day. He fancied that she was going to lead her goat to a field and return, but was struck and amazed when she told him that she and Bijou were going for a walk.

"Why," said he, "you are like the heroine of the French story—that gipsy girl I remember reading an account of in one of the Quarterlies—what's her name, Emerald? something like that."

"Esmeralda," answered Jessie, "I never

thought of her. But she was dark and I am fair, and her goat could dance and mine can't."

"You should teach it to dance. That will not only make it fit to mingle in the best society, but will qualify it for the diplomatic service if, at some future period, it should exhibit a taste for politics."

You will observe that Mr. Lockfield was fond of his little jest. But if Jessie had been born in the Orkney Islands she could not have been more insensible to this stroke of humour. What connection could there be, in her mind, between the dancing-master and foreign embassies?

Mr. Lockfield inquired if Mrs. Lovel was at home and was answered yes. Jessie said good-bye and left him, and he could not help watching her from the gate a moment or two as she walked down the lane followed by her goat, and remarking what a pretty picture the pair made, and think-

ing what a lucky dog the man would be who should own that sunny-haired maiden with the graceful figure and innocent tastes. He could never look at her without feeling twenty years younger and suffering from an infusion of airiness that sent his fingers twitching at his back hair, and caused him to straighten himself on his heels. The truth is, he was gradually approaching the age at which a man begins to consider his person lovely. At forty the years sit heavily upon conceit; but at sixty who does not consider himself irresistible to women?

Mrs. Lovel was knitting a kind of overall garment for Martha Bobbin's baby. She was glad to see Mr. Lockfield, and immediately began to tell of her visit to Springfield House. Mr. Andrews was undeniably polite and generous; his sister was beyond praise; such tenderness of sentiment, such

strength of judgment, such a truly Christian conception of the duties of life!

"Upon my word, Mr. Lovel, you greatly gratify me by liking my friends. But confess now, you were a little prejudiced against Mr. Andrews at the beginning of your acquaintance."

"Oh, pray don't think that I have completely changed my mind, that I think him perfect."

"Who is perfect, ma'm? who *is* perfect?"

"Understand me," said Mrs. Lovel. "I think Mr. Andrews a very genteel young man, but you never could persuade me to consider him a paragon."

"As to his face," responded Mr. Lockfield, purposely misunderstanding the old lady, "it is not his fault if his whiskers are fluffy and his eyes——"

"Mr. Lockfield, I wonder you should think that a man's face could weigh *that*,"

cried Mrs. Lovel snapping her fingers, "in my opinion of him as a human being. Let the mind be right and I don't care what covers it. The worth of a diamond isn't affected because it's packed in a deal box."

"I suppose by this time you have seen for yourself that he admires your niece."

"Yes. His admiration is very great."

"He is deeply in love with her, Mrs. Lovel."

"Pray be careful, pray be careful, Mr. Lockfield," cried the old lady, glancing hurriedly round the room. "I wouldn't have Jessie hear you for——"

"Oh, she is half a mile down the lane. I met her going out with her goat."

"Then Jane might overhear us, and I don't want that young person to imbibe more ideas than she already possesses from anything we might say. As it is she has a follower, and I expect to receive notice from her every day."

"But see, Mrs. Lovel, Andrews's love for your niece has nothing to do with Jane. I have called expressly to discuss this subject with you, and to try to persuade you not to allow your prejudices against marriage to stand in the way of Miss Marchmont's happiness and future."

"Is he going to ask her in marriage?" said the old lady quickly.

"It must come to that."

"Then he'll have to wait. Never could I give my consent to anything so monstrously hurried. What, going to ask in marriage a girl he scarcely knows?"

"Don't say that, Mrs. Lovel. He knows her thoroughly, has thought about her day and night ever since he first saw her at church. He couldn't know her better if he were to know her for twenty years; for, supposing her to have any faults—I don't say she has—his love would blind him to them: and you would still find him

a spectator, an admirer, a slave of the perfections that have turned his head."

"Ay, that's it, turned his head. He *must* be mad to talk of marriage."

"He hasn't talked of marriage. It's my own idea. What I say is this: no man can love a woman as young Andrews loves your niece without wishing to marry her. When he will ask her I can't guess; that must depend upon circumstances, upon your niece, yourself. But I want to advise you earnestly, as an old friend, to stifle your objections to marriage, to give this young man encouragement, to allow him to converse and walk with your niece, and to make her a present, as it were, of a splendid future, such a future as nine hundred and ninety-nine mothers—*mothers*, Mrs. Lovel—out of every thousand never dare to hope to win for their daughters, strive as they all do to secure rich husbands for their girls by giving parties, by going into

debt, and driving the head of the house into the 'London Gazette.'"

"Don't, pray, don't compare me to such people," cried Mrs. Lovel, holding up her hands.

"Yet they are honest enough, Mrs. Lovel. Their ends are worthy. They want to see their children in good positions."

"Oh, shocking, shocking, Mr. Lockfield! if there is a woman in this world truly despicable, truly immoral, it is a mother who deliberately drags her child into society and pushes her at the first man she meets who has a reputation for money."

"That is too harsh a view to take of it. Would you like to see your niece in a garret?"

"I'd rather see her transported than marrying a man only because he has money. Why am I prejudiced against marriage? Because it is a game, a *game*, Mr. Lockfield, where everybody is trying to cheat

everybody, where everybody's eyes are upon the stakes, where hearts go for nothing, and where knaves are trumps all the year round. Because I live in a quiet watering-town am I to have no eyes, no ears, no mind? What is love? two people meet and look, sigh and grow pale, the girl puts her needle away and buys Moore's poems; the youth makes wrong calculations in his employer's ledger, and perhaps robs the till to make the girl presents. They marry after a frightful deal of wrangling with each other and with their families, after they have become scraggy for want of sleep, feeble-minded for want of rational thinking, and then the girl begins to fret. Richard isn't the same as he used to be; Richard is very often cross; Richard's temper is anything but sweet; Richard is out enjoying himself whilst his wife sits at home afflicted with the double calamity of a bad servant and a young baby. Her

liberty is gone; she isn't allowed,—properly, if you like; I would have a wife very strict—I say she isn't allowed to please others, and the only person she may please, her husband, is tired of being pleased; she becomes a drudge; the nursery fills; she has no leisure to see her friends; all her time is spent in looking after the cook and bathing the children, in reading 'Hints to Mothers' and wondering where Richard is. Is that the sort of life you'd encourage a young girl to enter?"

"But where there is money most of these troubles are obviated."

"Will money prevent babies from teething and going into convulsions? Will money keep soldiers and policemen out of the kitchen? Money brings troubles, Mr. Lockfield. It brings society, balls and fiddlers into your house, intoxicated waiters, and a melancholy misapprehension of your rightful position. I say, it is not because I

live in Sandhaven that I'm to be ignorant of the truth."

"I'll tell you what it is, Mrs. Lovel," said Mr. Lockfield, who having come to do all the talking, resented the old lady's rapacious appropriation of his rights, "whether you like it or not, young people *will* fall in love, *will* marry, *will* have families with a tendency to teethe, and *will* pass like their fathers and mothers before them, a life made up of sorrows and pleasures. Your niece will prove no exception, take my word for it. She is too pretty, too soft-hearted, to care to be an old maid. In Mr. Andrews she will find, I believe, a man who will make her a good husband, who will give her a good house to live in, a plentiful table to preside at, a well-filled purse for her private wants, and all the luxuries, comforts, and conveniencies which very greatly contribute to mundane happiness. Her husband has a living in his gift.

If she has a son there is a warm nest ready for him to fill—for by that time I ought to be out of the way. Through that church what is to prevent her son walking to power and profit? Are these things nothing? Is a Bishop nothing? But let us take your views. You object to Mr. Andrews. What happens? Miss Marchmont by-and-by meets with a young man she *will* love, she *will* marry in spite of you. He is an infidel, perhaps; he is poor, or badly-connected, or a Frenchman, or a dissenter; he takes her to his little garret, he starves her on rice-pudding, and one day vanishes, having been seized in the night with an irresistible longing to return to his wife and six children in New York."

On this powerful and grimy picture of the possible, Mr. Lockfield considered he might safely rest his colloquial fame. He viewed it with exquisite satisfaction, as a most ingenious reverse of the ugly, sordid

description Mrs. Lovel had given of the thrice-blessed state of matrimony.

And, to conceal nothing, Mrs. Lovel *was* affected. It *did* seem probable that some of these days Jessie might take it into her head to fall in love, and choose for that purpose one of the last men in the world Mrs. Lovel would have chosen for her. Whereas, not to speak of Mr. Andrews being rich, and owning a beautiful house—wretched trifles, indeed, though she admitted that they ought to be allowed to have their weight—she knew him to be a Protestant and a Low Churchman, and to have a sister who was wonderfully good to the poor, and distinguished by the possession of many virtues.

"Your suggestions are very horrid, Mr. Lockfield," said she.

"But aren't they probable?"

"No! I believe Jessie to be too right-

minded to marry any man I objected to."

"That is, providing she wasn't in love with him."

"Well, well," exclaimed the old lady anxiously, "we'll say no more about Mr. Andrews for the present. They scarcely know each other."

"But don't repel him. Think, when you see him, of the Frenchman and the garret, and the wife in New York," said Mr. Lockfield, laughing and getting up. "The worst you can say against my young friend is that he prefers London to Sandhaven, and is rather overpowering in his wish to be kind. But aren't such faults better than atheism, poverty, and bigamy?"

Mrs. Lovel could see nothing to laugh at. Indeed she could have sat down and had a good cry after the clergyman had left. He, on the other hand, went on his way rejoicing. He believed that he had made

considerable progress, and longed to meet Andrews, that he might let him know how great was the service he was doing him, and how immensely obliged he ought to feel.

CHAPTER III.

A FAMILY DINNER.

THURSDAY came, and astounded Mrs. Lovel with the rapidity with which time flies. She would have given a great deal to have been able to back out of her engagement at Springfield House. There was no use arguing—she did *not* care about society, about dinners, about small-talk. She liked her fire, she liked her habits. She knew that she ought to make some sacrifices for Jessie; but that didn't render the trouble of dressing, the cold drive, the sure dyspeptic attack, and the highly

probable attack of bronchitis, more tolerable.

But, having accepted the invitation, nothing short of illness could keep her away, As to making any of those excuses for her non-appearance which are current in the most conscientious society, and which everybody understands, the old lady would as soon have thought of stealing her servant's clothes, or picking Mr. Lockfield's pockets. In her eyes a lie was a lie, let it be called by whatever name you please. Could anything demonstrate the total unfitness of this old lady for society better than her conscience?

She was ready—as was her custom—a full three quarters of an hour before the carriage Mr. Andrews had promised to send was due. She sat in the parlour, upright before the fire; not daring to lean back lest her hair should be disordered; on her head a white lace cap of a very superior quality,

and of great singularity of pattern; her dress a black satin gown—her husband's gift twenty years before — its fashion as fashion then was—leg of mutton sleeves and very flat behind; against her throat a brooch of uncommon dimensions, likewise her husband's gift, and bearing his moody profile; upon her arms jet bracelets, which matched with a ponderous chain round her neck. She certainly looked very smart and very uncomfortable. She held an antique smelling-bottle in her hand, which she frequently applied to her nose, and for ever and ever was she turning her eyes upon the clock, and then upon the window, and trying to console herself with the reflection that in a few hours' time she would be back in her parlour again, and her trials over. So the condemned felon hears St. Sepulchre's bell toll, and thinks, "This time to-morrow I'll be out of my trouble."

Five minutes before the carriage drove

up Jessie entered the room. She had been out with her goat when her aunt had gone to her bedroom; and the business of her toilet therefore had hardly taken her a quarter of an hour to accomplish. But she couldn't have looked better had she spent the whole day before the looking-glass. This is the more surprising when you consider that she wore no false hair. Any woman ought to dress quickly who has nothing to do but to skewer an elaborate, glossy, and lovely head of hair on with a hair-pin or two. Give Sir Fopling a wig and you enable him to save at least a quarter of an hour in making a parting.

She had only three or four dresses, and had asked her aunt which she should put on. There was no choice; she could wear nothing but mourning. Indeed, had not Mr. Andrews represented his dinner-party as strictly a family gathering, she could not

have accepted it. How could she have gone to a dinner-party, when it was only the other day her father died?

It does not very much matter what she wore. A sage of the last century defines, with philosophic acuteness, a well-dressed lady as a woman, so attired, sir, that after she has left you you shall not know, sir, what she had on. Certainly the only end and aim of dressing is to make a lady look well. All the dressmakers and all the milliners, backed by the men of Lyons and Eugene Rimmel, and inspired by the genius of the midland weavers, can't do more for a woman than that. Jessie looked very well; a great deal more piquant in her sables than had she sported the rainbow splendours of the newest fashions and colours; lovely in her face, fairy-like in her figure.

Mrs. Lovel nodded with a kind of saturnine complacency: complained of a want of appetite, and cold feet; and while Jessie

sympathized, up drove Mr. Andrews's brougham.

"How much more comfortable a private carriage is than a fly," was the only exclamation that escaped Mrs. Lovel during the ten minutes' drive. At all events there was no chance of the pretty lining and warm wool mat, and well-stuffed cushions, being damp.

The pink flush shed by the setting sun had not faded off the sky when they reached the house; but the drawing-room shutters were closed, and the room lighted up—not with gas, for that element had not yet made its way to Sandhaven, but with lamps and candles. Mrs. Lovel's first idea as she entered, was, that Mr. Andrews had deceived her, and that the dinner-party was to be a large one, for her sight not being strong, she imagined she saw a good many persons in the room.

There were, however, but four—Bessie

lying on a sofa, and near her Mr. Lockfield, Mr. Andrews, who stepped forwards briskly to meet the ladies, and a young gentleman, who leaned against the mantelpiece.

Mrs. Lovel received a warm welcome from Bessie and Mr. Lockfield. The young gentleman who leaned against the mantelpiece was introduced to her and Jessie by Mr. Andrews as "my cousin, Robert Grahame." Jessie looked at him, and liked his appearance very much—(Of course! you say: I expected something of this kind all along. Pray, dear, dear madam, be patient. The author promises to astonish you, in spite of your surprising penetration and foresight)—liked his appearance very much. He was dark, rather foreign-looking, had a sunburnt complexion, large, honest brown eyes, and wore a moustache. He was dressed in evening costume, as Andrews was. He bowed very politely to Jessie on being introduced to her, and

she noticed that he kept the finger of his left hand hooked in his waistcoat to support his arm; but he did not seem much struck by her appearance, nor regard her with half the attention you would have said she deserved had you seen her pretty hair and sweet face in the light of the candles and lamps, and the baby-like curiosity and admiration that glowed in her blue eyes as she cast them round the handsome room.

A very few minutes after Jessie and Mrs. Lovel's arrival, dinner was announced, whereupon—what do you think happened? —Mr. Andrews gave his arm to Mrs. Lovel.

But before we applaud him, let us see where Jessie is to sit. Mr. Lockfield took *her;* and "my cousin, Robert Grahame" followed alone, which was unavoidable, for Bessie remained on the sofa in the drawing-room.

How gay and festive the dining-room looked, lighted by candles in their silver candlesticks, and in old-fashioned sconces against the wall! There were real flowers upon the table, which Mrs. Lovel longed to smell, so greatly did her languid circulation make her enamoured of all references to summer. How the glass and silver sparkled! how richly the ruby and gold-coloured wines dyed the elegantly-chased crystal! Around were pictures, not so fine as those in the library, but very pleasing, very cheerful.

Mr. Andrews took the head of the table; and now, to prove to you after all that the young man's politeness was not so extraordinarily self-sacrificing, consider this explanation of a diag not be drawn. At the h at the foot, Mr. Grah Mr. Andrews, Mrs Mr. Grahame, M

of Mr. Andrews, and necessarily close to him, because Mr. Lockfield shared that side of the table with her, Jessie Marchmont. In consequence of this arrangement, Mr. Lockfield keeps Jessie in the corner hard by the host's chair, and separates Jessie from Mr. Grahame, and by the interposition of his head and person, almost prevents them seeing each other.

It took Mr. Andrews a whole hour to mature this table stratagem.

The dinner begins, and the conversation labours and languishes. Mr. Lockfield has most to say—asks questions of Mrs. Lovel, makes diverting remarks to Jessie over his soup-plate without looking at her, tells Andrews he never saw him looking so well, extols the cook, and inquires of Mr. Grahame what real curry is like.

Mr. Grahame's appearance is decidedly gentleman-like. He is singularly easy in his manner, and answers Mr. Lockfield's

questions very affably. Jessie suddenly remembers that he is in the army, that he has been in India, thinks of her papa, and forthwith finds Mr. Grahame peculiarly interesting. She would like to ask him at once what regiment he is in, and if he ever heard of Colonel Marchmont; but is afraid that he will think her bold, and that Aunt Lovel will give her a look.

After the third course, Mr. Andrews plucks up his spirits, and engages her in a conversation. Of course he makes inquiries after her goat. And why shouldn't the goat be a very good substitute for the weather as a topic? In the country young men haven't half the materials to begin a conversation on that they possess in London. You can't talk about the opera, where there is nothing but dissolving views; of the Zoological Gardens, where there is nothing but kitchen gardens; of the Royal Academy, where there is nothing

but private academies. You *must* begin on Mr. Baldhead's sermon last Sunday, or the high opinion the curate has of his parts and powers as a flautist. Not that Mr. Andrews would have talked bucolically had he met with a town-bred lady. No man was better acquainted with the London theatres, and the names of the principal actors; only last year he had been introduced to Signor Rumbelini, who had ravished London as Edgardo, and Edouardo, and half-a-dozen other o's; moreover, he had had his fortune told several times at Cremorne, and had passed a good many happy days at Rosherville. But what did Jessie know of these things? Wouldn't she have taken as much interest in Punch and Judy as in the celebrated actors who were terrifying the town with swoons, curses, and frowns? No. He talked of her goat. He talked of the sea. He mentioned the subject of riding. He explained

his sentiments on the matter of female beauty, and avowed an enthusiastic preference for fair-haired women, though he acknowledged it was a sort of superstition among men that fair-haired women were cold. Jessie said, "Yes," and "Indeed," and glanced aside at Mr. Grahame, and longed to ask him about India and papa.

However, for a good long while at that dinner-table, Mr. Andrews had Jessie to himself; for Mr. Grahame happening to make some remark upon a subject Mr. Lockfield considered himself eminently qualified to discuss, an argument took place, which, in a very short time, sucked Mrs. Lovel into its vortex, and kept their three attentions entirely away from the host and the young lady at his side.

When the ladies withdrew, you may be sure the gentlemen were not long following them. Mr. Lockfield, perhaps, being middle-aged, and rather fond of a cigar

after a late dinner, might not have felt indisposed to sit on; Mr. Grahame, too, seemed satisfied to remain where he was; but Mr. Andrews turned about in his chair, passed the bottle hurriedly, looked at the door, interrupted Mr. Lockfield twice, and at last gasped out, "Let us join the ladies."

Jessie had been asking questions about Mr. Grahame of Miss Andrews, and heard that he was in such and such a regiment, that his mother lived in Calcutta with her second husband, who was an agent there for some shipping company, and that the son and the parent were not on such good terms as they ought to be, an observation which Mrs. Lovel had seized upon as an excuse to air, in her most decided manner, some very obstinate prejudices she had respecting second marriages—first marriages, in her sight, being bad enough, and second marriages criminal.

When the gentlemen entered the room, Bessie immediately called to Mr. Grahame, who came and stood before her and Jessie, while Mr. Lockfield engaged Mrs. Lovel, and Mr. Andrews, looking from time to time somewhat gloomily at his cousin, took up a portfolio of music and turned its contents over.

"Miss Marchmont's father was in the army, Robert," said Bessie.

"In what regiment?" he asked, looking down with his kind eyes into Jessie's sweet eager face.

She told him, named the year in which he had sold out, and spoke of the two or three actions he had been engaged in; for she had learned from her mamma and her papa's friends most of the incidents of his professional life, was immensely proud of him, and so tenderly loved his memory, that she could scarce mention his name

without the light in her blue eyes fading out, and her face becoming pensive.

Now it happened that Mr. Grahame knew Colonel Marchmont by name, and had heard him spoken of as a good officer, though he had quitted the army before his time. Jessie's mention of a certain smart action with which the colonel's name was identified in India, had freshened his memory.

"I should say that there are few persons in India who haven't heard of Colonel Marchmont," said he. "In that action you speak of he defeated——" here he told the story.

"It is quite true, Miss Andrews," said Jessie, her eyes sparkling with pleasure; "and once he entered a native village at the head of a few soldiers, and obliged *hundreds* of armed natives to run away, and liberated some officers' wives and their

children, who had been captured and thrown into a dreadful prison."

"And one of those ladies was the wife of the colonel of my regiment, Mrs. Johnstone," said Mr. Grahame, smiling at the girl's charming enthusiasm, and made very happy to think that her bright face was due to his knowledge of her father.

Mr. Andrews, standing at the piano, turning over the portfolio of music, continued glancing askew from time to time at his cousin Robert, and wondered what the deuce he could be talking about to make Jessie so radiant.

"I was born in India, Mr. Grahame," said Jessie.

"I should much like to meet Colonel Marchmont. Does he live at Sandhaven?"

"He is dead—he was drowned at La Force last October."

He ran his eye over her sables, dwelt pityingly upon her young face, and with

much tact changed the subject. He talked to her about India; he told her that one of his native servants having taken offence at some imaginary slight, had shot him; the ball, aimed at his head, entered his right shoulder, and for some weeks he had been afraid either that his whole side would be paralyzed, or that he should lose his arm. He had been greatly pulled down by the pain, and the doctor had ordered him to Europe for the change of climate. Up to within the last week he had worn his arm in a sling; he was glad to get rid of that encumbrance, as it looked affected, but his shoulder was still stiff, and he had to rest it by keeping his finger hooked in his waistcoat.

Jessie listened to him with the deepest concern, and regarded the wounded arm with charming pity and tenderness. She made way for him to sit by her side, but Mr. Andrews at that moment came up and asked her to sing.

"Don't ask me to sing, Mr. Andrews, I am really too nervous."

"But you do sing?"

"I only know one or two French songs, and I can't sing them."

"Why not?"

"I don't think my aunt would like to hear me."

"Mrs. Lovel," said Mr. Andrews, "Miss Marchmont has consented to sing a French song if you will let her."

"What is it about, Jessie?" asked Mrs. Lovel.

"I don't want to sing, aunt. The French songs I know are very silly. You will be the first to laugh at me, Mr. Andrews."

"Not I, indeed. Let me take you to the piano."

It was as troublesome and embarrassing to Jessie to refuse as to comply. She looked at her aunt; Mrs. Lovel made a

gesture—a compromise between a shrug and a nod. Jessie went to the piano, and Mr. Andrews posed himself at her side. Mrs. Lovel felt deplorably nervous, while Jessie sat for a little while thinking over the songs she used to sing at La Force. Some of her choruses were a little too simple and trifling in matter for our English audience, of whom, at all events, three understood French—Andrews and his sister and Mr. Lockfield. "Au clair de la lune," was therefore out of the question; "Deux etoiles" and "Malbrook" would not do either. Come, she would sing three verses from the only rational song she knew, "Le Roi d'Yvetot," so she struck the piano and began—

"Il était un roi d'Yvetot,
Peu connu dans l'histoire;
Se levant tard, se couchant tôt,
Dormant fort bien sans gloire,
Et couronné par Jeanneton
D'un simple bonnet de coton,
Dit-on.

Oh! oh! oh! oh! ah! ah! ah! ah!
Quel bon petit roi c'était là!
La! la!"

"What does all that oh, oh, ohing, and la laring mean?" asked Mrs. Lovel, anxiously, of Mr. Lockfield between the verses. For all she knew, it might be an attack upon the Protestant religion.

"Hush, dear madam! don't interrupt her. Really, her singing is uncommonly pretty," whispered Mr. Lockfield.

It *was* pretty. What does it matter whether her voice was a soprano, or contralto, or any other o? Suppose the beating of her little heart echoed through the notes, and made them tremulous? Her sweet face was so honest, her voice so tender and womanly, her touch so delicate, the words of the song so charming, the melody so catching, that it was a real treat to hear her and look at her. There were more verses to the song, and she would have sung them through, for Béranger's poem had

been a great favourite with her father, and he used to make her sing it to him over and over again. But she thought her hearers were tired, jumped up, and went quickly back to her seat near Bessie, blushing like a rose under the chorus of applause, compliments, and handclaps that burst from Messieurs Lockfield, Andrews, and Grahame.

"What do you call that song?" asked Mrs. Lovel.

"Le Roi d'Yvetot."

"Eh?"

"The King of Yvetot."

"I have never heard of him," said Mrs. Lovel, "and yet I have read a good deal about France."

Mr. Lockfield seeing Mrs. Lovel bidding fair to make herself ridiculous, came gallantly to the rescue.

"Mr. Andrews, we are all anxious to hear you sing."

"No, another time," said Mr. Andrews, turning pale.

"Sing 'Ever of Thee,'" suggested Bessie.

"Yes, yes, 'Ever of Thee,'" cried the clergyman. "Help me to overcome his bashfulness, Miss Marchmont. You have no excuse not to sing, Andrews. You have a first-rate tenor voice."

"I'll sing after you," said Mr. Andrews to his cousin.

"Am I really wanted to sing?" asked Mr. Grahame.

"Yes," answered Bessie.

He smiled at her and went to the piano and sang an Irish melody. On its conclusion Mr. Andrews was not very loud in his applause, but the others were.

"What a pretty tune," exclaimed Jessie; "all Irish music is charming, I think."

"It is all touching," said Miss Andrews; "there is an under tone of pathos, even in Irish comic songs."

"I prefer the Scotch songs," observed Mr. Andrews, irritated by the interest his cousin appeared to have excited in Jessie.

"The music is pretty, but surely some of the words are sad nonsense," said Mr. Grahame.

"I agree with you," exclaimed Mrs. Lovel. "If my memory serves me, there is too much repetition."

"That's it. The trick of Scotch song-writing appears to be in getting a first line and repeating it," said Mr. Grahame; "if an Irishman or an Englishman were to write 'Oh, Jenny has a pretty eye,' he'd go on with more ideas, and be satisfied with having mentioned her eye once; but Sandy would write, 'Oh, Jeanie has a bonnie ee, Oh, Jeanie has a bonnie ee, Oh, Jeanie has a bonnie ee, and Sandy fell in love wi't.' I suppose this trick of reiteration comes from Sawney's love of deliberating before speaking."

"Well, give me the Scotch songs before the Irish," grumbled Mr. Andrews, combatively.

"The Irish for me," rejoined Mrs. Lovel, who was always ready to argue. "I can understand and relish the brogue; but the moment a man begins to 'wha' and 'ha' and 'frae' and 'dee,' I wish myself deaf."

Grahame laughed.

"My taste ought to be opposed to yours, Mrs. Lovel," said he, "for my father was a Scotchman. But I do think people cant tremendously about Scotch songs—that is, the words."

"They are very popular," exclaimed Jessie.

"The Scotch praise each other, that's why," said Mrs. Lovel. "Every Scotchman understands that it is a condition of his being that he speak well of everything north of the Tweed; though somehow the moment he can save a sixpence he travels

south, and stops there. There are Scotchmen everywhere, consequently everything Scotch is everywhere celebrated. Now Irishmen, who are a fairer people, abuse each other and everything belonging to them, wherever they are; and they, too, are everywhere. There you have the secret of the popularity of the Scotch songs as compared with Irish songs."

"I don't quite see," began Bessie.

Nor did the others quite see; but Mr. Lockfield, observing the cloud upon Mr. Andrews' brow, cut the argument short by begging him to sing "Ever of Thee," "Which," says he, "is neither Scotch nor Irish."

"Nor grammar," said Mr. Grahame.

"How do you mean—not grammar?" exclaimed Mr. Andrews, turning smartly upon him. "Do you know the words?"

"Quite well."

"Where's the bad grammar, then? I've

sung that song over and over again before people, and never heard it called bad grammar before."

"Mr. Lockfield," said Grahame laughing, "you shall decide."

"What are the words?" asked Mr. Lockfield, devoutly hoping that he would be able to agree with his patron.

"The first two lines run thus," said Andrews:

> "'Ever of thee, when sad and lonely,
> Wandering afar my soul joyed to dwell.'"

"There is positively no sense in that," cried Mrs. Lovel.

"Let us transpose the couplet," said Mr. Lockfield, thinking hard.

"Very well," exclaimed Mrs. Lovel, "transpose it."

"'My soul joyed to dwell, when sad and lonely, wandering afar, ever on thee.'"

"*Of* thee, Mr. Lockfield. Didn't you

say *of thee*, Mr. Andrews?" said Mrs. Lovel.

"Yes, and it's quite right too, for I've sung it before persons heaps of times."

"Make sense of it if you can, Mr. Lockfield!" cried the old lady triumphantly.

"It's a printer's mistake—the author wrote 'on,'" exclaimed Mr. Lockfield, looking nervously at Mr. Andrews.

"I always sing 'of thee,' and always shall," answered that young gentleman sullenly.

Jessie could have hugged Miss Andrews for the merry laugh that broke from her, and which permitted her to laugh too. Another moment and her gravity must have given way, though all the others should have been as solemn as a bench of magistrates.

"You see it's not sense, Peter," said Grahame.

"It's everywhere received for sense, any-

how," answered Peter, who could scarcely keep his passion under, so mortified was he —though why? did he write that popular song?

"Sense or no sense, pray sing it," exclaimed Mr. Lockfield, who wanted to see his young patron in better spirits, and felt very much annoyed with Mr. Grahame for starting the conversation.

"Will *you* sing it, Lockfield?" answered Andrews, who thought the clergyman was sneering at him.

"I haven't sung for twenty years," said the little man with great good temper.

Mr. Andrews stalked over to the table; and Bessie, who remarked her brother's irritability, said something which presently changed the conversation. Perhaps Grahame felt himself responsible for this brief bit of unpleasantness, for he contrived to make some remarks which brought An-

drews into the talk again, and put him into a good temper.

Mrs. Lovel and her niece were guests not hard to entertain. With Mr. Lockfield by her side the old lady was always content; and Jessie could have passed a very pleasant evening in talking with Miss Andrews and Grahame. But Andrews hadn't asked her to his house for that. The jealousy his cousin had unconsciously excited had acted upon his love like a blow on the back of a donkey, made it break into a heedless, obstinate gallop, so that his judgment running at its heels, could scarcely keep pace with it.

He cast about in his mind for some means to draw her away from Bessie and Grahame, and at last pulling a chair to the centre table, called her to look at some plates in a very sumptuously bound book.

She went, not very gleefully; he asked

her to sit; he then showed her the pictures, and began to talk to her.

"Hasn't she a sweet face?" said Bessie to Grahame.

"Very. Her child-like manner is wonderfully refreshing. Peter's time seems to have come."

Bessie smiled, but made no answer.

Grahame looked at Jessie with far more attention than he had bestowed upon her when they were first introduced. The way she had sung that French song delighted him. All the sweetness of her nature had been in her face whilst she sang it. Besides, it was a treat to him to see such a real type of an English blonde. In India the blonde was rare enough, and a goddess only to be dreamt of in that part of the country where he had been stationed when his man shot him. Being dark himself, it was, perhaps, natural that he should find something especially captivating in gold-coloured hair and

blue eyes, and a brow like ivory, and a throat like swan's-down. His sympathies went out to her too, as the daughter of an officer of repute. Then again her infantine ways were entirely opposed to his experiences of ladies in India. Amongst them indeed he was accustomed to hear some very plain speaking, striking mess-room exclamations, and to witness demeanours that exhibited quite a child-like love of freedom and nature. But Jessie's simplicity and candour were not exactly the same as he had been used to. Captain Larkins's wife, for instance, who was called "Baby Larkins" by everybody, was considered wonderfully unaffected and innocent at Madras, or Mysore, or Bombay, or wherever else she might be. But, compared with Jessie, here was a baby born with wisdom-teeth, whose pretty surprised airs reflected the looking-glass, whose blunt way of talking—so ravishing to the ear of newly-im-

ported cadets—was much too conscious of barrack-concerts and masculine merriment to gratify the lover of simplicity. Grahame saw, as any man with eyes in his head must have seen, that Jessie's manners and remarks were captivating only because they were perfectly natural to her. Unlike Baby Larkins there was no need for her to sacrifice a single characteristic to appear perfectly unsophisticated. She knew, for example, nothing whatever of Man. Baby Larkins knew a pretty good deal about Him. Jessie had passed all her life in little houses in Sydenham, or Boulogne, or La Force, with a sweet-tempered mother, seeing no society, with birds and white mice for her companions. Had mice and birds been Baby Larkins's companions? Well, we have nothing to do with this Baby, only so far as she existed in Grahame's mind as a type of infant-mannered women with whom to contrast this purer and truer

specimen of a baby-girl whom he was now watching with deepening interest as she turned over the pages of the book, and gave Mr. Andrews languid answers to his questions and observations.

"Mrs. Lovel," said Mr. Lockfield in a melodramatic whisper, "you can now, perhaps, realize the extent of the good fortune that would befall your niece if you were to give that young man encouragement."

"Pray—pray—think, Mr. Lockfield, if you should be overheard!" exclaimed Mrs. Lovel, violently agitated, looking at Jessie.

"But I am anxious that you should judge with your own eyes. You can see that Mr. Andrews is fond of her. Watch how he talks to her, and how pleased he looks. And don't lose sight of this room, ma'am; is this furniture, is this house, are the grounds stretching into the darkness all around us, to weigh nothing? You lose sight of all these things when you sit

in your parlour and think of marriage and Mr. Andrews's unfortunate partiality to London."

"No, I don't; I think of everything," answered the old lady, still greatly agitated, but obliged to answer in self-defence. "But what makes you so earnest? Isn't Mr. Andrews old enough to speak and act for himself?"

"There are a great number of reasons, Mrs. Lovel, why I should like to see—"

But here the old lady coughed violently, and continued to cough for some time; and then finding that she might burst every blood-vessel in her body before Mr. Lockfield would take the hint to be silent, she bade him in her most authoritative and decisive manner to say no more, but to reserve his observations for another opportunity.

Meanwhile the hours had been flitting

by rapidly, and it was now past nine o'clock. Mrs. Lovel perceiving the time, left Mr. Lockfield, stepped over to Mr. Andrews and told him she would feel greatly obliged if he would give orders for his carriage to take her and her niece home. A great deal of argument followed this very simple request. Everybody, including Mr. Lockfield, was against the old lady retiring so early.

Or—and this was Mr. Andrews's suggestion—or, if Mrs. Lovel liked, the carriage could take her home first, and afterwards fetch Miss Marchmont, whom Mr. Andrews dared to say Mr. Lockfield would be very pleased to escort. The foolish young man might just as well have asked Mrs. Lovel to subscribe to a testimonial to the Pope.

No thank you, sir. She would take her niece with her, she was much obliged. It was getting late — *would* Mr. Andrews kindly order the carriage?

"Do stop, Mrs. Lovel. The night is very cold. You must take something to keep you warm before you go," said Bessie from the sofa.

But Mrs. Lovel was a very nervous old lady; it had entered her head, like an inspiration, that it was time to be off; and every entreaty to stay a little longer only exasperated her anxiety and hardened her determination.

Miss Andrews pulled Jessie to her and gave her a kiss on wishing her good-bye. Mr. Grahame pressed her hand and looked at her very earnestly as she bade him good night. Mr. Andrews gave Mrs. Lovel his arm, and followed by Mr. Lockfield conducting Jessie, escorted the old lady to the carriage.

"Shall I see you to-morrow?" said he to Jessie.

"Perhaps," was her independent reply.

"Lockfield," said the young gentleman re-entering the house, "I would marry her now — at this moment — right off, if I thought she would have me."

CHAPTER IV.

A WICKED REPORT.

MRS. LOVEL talked a great deal about this dinner to Jessie. She came away in a good temper because she had been allowed to leave early. In the privacy, and cosiness, and security of her snug parlour she went through the whole business of the evening's entertainment, and found herself dwelling with considerable pleasure upon the attention Mr. Andrews had paid her. She had been made a great deal of by a rich young man in a very fine house: taken down to dinner by him; addressed with unfailing

respect; his carriage placed at her disposal. The sense that Jessie was entirely the reason of the young fellow's civility didn't lessen the satisfaction with which she reviewed it. Mr. Andrews might have given her to Mr. Lockfield to take to dinner, but his politeness was superior to his admiration: he had sacrificed Jessie for her; the pleasure it would have given him to have had Jessie on his arm to the courtesy that was due to an old lady. That showed a virtue; that showed gentility; that showed powers of self-abnegation.

Yes, Mrs. Lovel was pleased with him, with her dinner, her reception, her evening. She was glad her trials were ended; but being ended, she was gratified they were well ended.

Suppose she had been told that Mr. Andrews would have cheerfully hanged her by the bell-rope when she insisted upon his pulling it to order the carriage? Suppose

some little bird had whispered that he had indulged in some very vigorous abuse of her after she had left the house, making Mr. Lockfield bite his lip, exciting protests from Bessie, and causing Mr. Grahame to wonder at his manners. Probably she would have cut him, called him a very despicable young man, exulted in remembering that her first prejudices were adverse to him.

Well, had she lived much in society, she might easily have guessed that ill-natured things *would* be said against her, after her back was turned. People who imagine unflattering criticisms, and diverting sarcasms, and comical mimicry, are not the obligations that attend a love of evening parties, ought to bribe the footman to listen to what is said of them after they have gone away. This is very uncharitable, very ungenerous, of course; the writer who can deliberately make such observations

must be a very vulgar person, quite unused to good society, an habitué of kitchens, a reader of Reynolds's Miscellany, no doubt. But, dear Mr. Puff, honest-hearted hireling in the cause of literary and domestic virtue, after your friends have left your hospitable house, has your wife never commented on the extraordinary behaviour of Miss Trifle with Captain Cracker? has your daughter never imitated old Lady Curmudgeon's face, when she found that her girl was not dancing? have *you* never passed your little criticism on the pretentious talk of the newly elected member for Munster (whom, look you, you listened to very deferentially, whilst he declaimed on Irish grievances over a cup of coffee, downstairs), that member, who, a few years ago, you informed your family, had scarcely shoes to his feet, could not write a grammatical letter, and who never could have made money, had he not—unprincipled—

cheated poor—swindled the—plundered—&c., &c., &c.

What is the use of looking virtuous and affronted, when we are all guilty? If we are not to be allowed to feast our friends and criticize them, to drink their healths, and mimic the emotion our eloquent toasts wrought in them, to listen respectfully to their remarks, and laugh at their assumption of wit, of humour, of knowledge; what fun would there be in giving balls, in paying dressmakers' and confectioners' and florists' bills? As these things seldom help us to marry our daughters, or increase our stock of clients, or make us more loved, what, I repeat, is the use of them if they don't furnish us with matter for jest and laughter and sneers, Mr. Puff?

Jessie didn't stop at home next day, because there was a chance of Mr. Andrews calling. She wanted to go for a walk on the sands with her aunt; but Mrs.

Lovel had been out in the morning making some purchases, felt tired, and preferred to remain at home.

But Jessie need never be companionless whilst she had her goat. She fastened a collar around Bijou's neck and led it forth into the lane, down which she tripped with her heart and spirits well in unison with the bright sky, the joyous sunlight and keen air.

The lane led into a high road which skirted the coast for several miles, introducing a few picturesque villages to the wayfarer, before it landed him in the large town of M———. A mile and a half down this road was, however, as far as ever Jessie adventured. At that distance from her aunt's house was a little white-faced cottage at which, when the humour took her, she would sometimes stop and drink a draught of new milk. The tenants, consisting of an old woman, with half a dozen

rough-headed grandchildren, knew her well, applauded her half pence, and, while she rested, would let Bijou make a meal off such vegetable-heads as it might find in the slip of ground at the side.

She walked as far as the cottage that afternoon, and seeing old Mrs. Pickerel at the door, banging a mat full of holes against a post, asked how her cold was, and whether her son had come home yet from the North Sea, whither he had sailed in a Shoreham smack.

"Step in, miss, step in and rest yourself. Bill," she called to an urchin who was peering steadfastly into a hedge some way down the road, "take the lady's goat and gi' him a fyow cabbage leaves, and doan't be havin' no larks, or yow'l get no tea."

Jessie entered the little chamber which the miserable furniture could hardly make sordid, so well swept was the floor, and so clean the dresser with its half dozen plates

of different patterns, and queer-looking candlesticks and pannikins. The old grandmother bustled out to fill one of these pannikins with milk; but first she let Jessie see how much she loved cleanliness by holding the vessel under a pump.

It was some comfort to Jessie to hear that all the grand-children, save Bill, had gone out on an exploring tour, in search of whatever objects of interest or value the fields, hedges, and gutters of the neighbourhood might conceal. Innocence is very pleasing, and children she loved. But simplicity may be qualified by dirt; and the infant whose fingers are perpetually sporting with the intricacies of its red hair, Jessie could only think pretty when a hedge or a wall separated her from him.

Mrs. Pickerel was a rather waggish old woman, and Jessie was always amused to hear her talk. Her dialect was very

Kentish, of which the peculiarity largely consists in saying "wan" for "one," and "tew" for "two," and "yow" for "you," and "moy" for "my." She always had an astonishing stock of complaints on hand —nothing was ever well with her. In her young days the poor had some chances; now they was all worse nor the Airish. A shillin' weren't no longer a shillin', a four-penny bit 'ud ha' bought more wittles whan she were a gairl, than ten toimes that money 'ud buoy now. She was often wishin', she were, that the airth 'ud hopen and swallow 'em all oop. Look at Jim, her son, the feyther of them young 'uns. There he was at sea, all the year round, knockin' about for fish which warn't always to be got, they wasn't; a man forty year old, miss, come June, as hadn't bin able to save a penny, tho' soom o' his shares had bin pretty stiff, tew; and what chance was there for him, she'd like to

know? was he ever likely to be a smack owner? Why, it took more money than iver she could reckon to buoy a smack and fit her wi' gear, and them as had money were always owin' more, and there was no good in the world, and she only prayed and trustited that wan day the airth 'ud hopen, and swaller all the poor oop, for the airth worn't made for the poor, but for folks wi' money.

Jessie had been listening to her complaints for some ten minutes, sometimes affected by her lamentable view of things, sometimes smiling at her queer expressions, and had put the pannikin down in order to feel for her purse, when little Bill came running headlong into the room, shouting:—

"Oh, granny, granny! there's a man fall'n off his horse—sitch a thing! clean down he fell, hard oop agin the hedge, and there he's layin' wi' his horse tew! sitch a

foine sight! Make haste, or they'll be oop and gone!"

Jessie started up and ran out, followed by Mrs. Pickerel. Down the long road, three hundred yards off, was stretched a horse on its side, its legs stiff out; and near it was a man, who, as Jessie turned towards him, slowly got up, seated himself against the bank and began with very languid gestures to flap the dust off his trousers with a pocket-handkerchief.

The moment Jessie was close enough to see his face, she recognized him as Mr. Grahame.

"Are you hurt?" she called to him.

"I don't think so," he answered, clearly not knowing her.

"Surely your horse isn't dead, Mr. Grahame?" she exclaimed, looking with indescribable compassion upon the animal.

He glanced quickly at her on hearing his name pronounced, and said :—

"Miss Marchmont! I really didn't recognize you! My fall must have blinded me."

"What a dreadful accident! Are you sure you are not hurt? Mrs. Pickerel's cottage is close at hand——"

"Wi' a good foire in't, and a broosh as'll soon put the gentleman to roights," exclaimed the old woman, blowing like a whale after her short but sharp run. "An' I can give yer as good a glass of old Jamaica rum, as iver you tasted in yer loife, sir."

"It is pleasant, under difficulties, to find oneself among friends," said Grahame, smiling at Jessie.

He left the bank with a rather uncertain step, picked up his riding-whip and hat, and catching hold of the bridle, cried "Come, up with you—so!" The horse snorted, scrambled, plunged, and found his

feet in a moment. Grahame eyed him critically.

"His side is a little dusty, but that will do him no hurt. Peter wouldn't forgive me had his horse come to grief through my clumsiness. And it was no fault of mine either. I don't know what threw us—that ugly-looking stone, there, perhaps. But I must thank God my neck isn't broken. A man might as well fall on iron, as on this frost-bound road."

He gave the reins to the old woman, asked her to lead the horse to the cottage, and then drew to Jessie, limping a little.

"Lean on my shoulder, Mr. Grahame; that will help you to walk more easily."

He thanked her, and rested his hand on her shoulder as lightly as he would have caressed a bird. He frequently turned to look at the horse, and seemed more concerned about the animal than about himself.

"Do you think this fall will hurt your shoulder? You ought not to ride until your arm is well."

"I fell on my right side, fortunately. You are very good, Miss Marchmont, to take so much interest in my misadventure. I cannot conceive how I failed to recognize you at once. But then you see I could not expect the happiness of meeting you in so lonely a place."

"I frequently come here for a walk with my goat. Aunt Lovel doesn't care for me to go into the town with it—she thinks people would stare at me. I am not much more than a mile away from home. This is Mrs. Pickerel's cottage. Fasten the reins to the gate, Mrs. Pickerel. The horse will be quite safe, and Billy can brush him."

Still leaning on Jessie's shoulder, Grahame entered the cottage. The old woman placed a chair for him near the fire, and

bustled about in search of the Jamaica rum, which she presently produced. Grahame made a wry face over the raw draught, but very soon owned that it had done him no harm.

Jessie stood looking at him anxiously. All her kind heart was in her eyes, and her tender concerned spirit made her face pensive with the gentlest sympathy. He understood her anxiety, and assured her that he had received no worse injury than a good shaking.

"But I am thinking of your wounded shoulder, and that the fall might have killed you."

"*You* would have felt sorry, at all events."

"Yes, very, *very* sorry."

She could see no harm in telling him her thoughts. She liked him and his kind, honest eyes, and his manly face, and the delicate and delightful quality of respect

that coloured his manner towards her. How different he was from Mr. Andrews, with his bold stare and intrusive ways! She did not feel in the slightest degree embarrassed to find herself with Mr. Grahame in a cottage a mile and a half away from her aunt's house; but had she found herself with Mr. Andrews in a similar position, she would have seized her goat without parley, made her pretty curtsey, and hurried home.

"If you'll stand up, I'll broosh yer, sir," says Mrs. Pickerel, advancing with a very formidable-looking engine, hideous with bristles.

"Haven't you a softer brush?" asked Jessie, thinking of the wounded shoulder.

"That will do very well, thank you, Miss Marchmont," said Mr. Grahame, standing up, and posing himself in a submissive attitude.

But Jessie thought the old lady applied

the brush too hard, took it out of her hand, and silencing Mr. Grahame's protest with a merry laugh, brushed his coat herself.

As often as he could, or, rather, as often as his politeness would permit him, he looked at her. Their eyes constantly met; but on these occasions Jessie never showed any emotion, never blushed, nor trembled. She felt perfectly at home with this young man, chatted to him gaily, and fairly puzzled and charmed him by the mingled qualities of childishness and womanly perception her remarks exhibited.

"I mustn't say a word to Peter about this accidental meeting," said he, "or he will shoot me."

"Shoot you! why?"

"He would go mad with jealousy."

"What is there to make him jealous?"

"Oh, a very great deal," he answered, laughing.

"I don't understand."

"Aren't you engaged to be married to him, Miss Marchmont?"

"*I!!!!*"

There was enormous wonder in her open eyes, and then the colour rushed into her face; she turned her head to hide the blush that literally stung her.

He was perplexed, and vexed, and astonished by the effect his words had produced.

"Don't make me responsible for what I have said. My cousin gave me to understand last night, after you had left, that you and he were engaged to be married."

"He told you a very wicked story."

"What could be his object?" asked Grahame, confounded.

Jessie was deeply offended. She walked to the door, meaning to take Bijou and go home. But Grahame went after her, seized her hand, and detained her.

"Miss Marchmont, you must not leave

me without saying good-bye. I am sincerely grieved to have said anything to vex you; I really thought my cousin was in earnest, or you may be sure I should never have dreamt of repeating such an idle and stupid assertion."

"I am not angry with you. Your cousin told you a story. I am not engaged to him—I don't like him."

"But Mr. Lockfield was present when Peter told me you and he were engaged; and I made sure, by the way they exchanged looks, that my cousin was in earnest."

"You know the truth now, Mr. Grahame. I am not angry with you. Good-bye."

They shook hands. He watched her for a long time as she walked along the road followed by Bijou. His face wore a very puzzled look; but this passed after a little, and he burst into a laugh. "I see your

meaning, Peter!" thought he. "But what a very jealous dog you must be to think your love worth protecting with a lie!"

"Aunt," said Jessie, entering the parlour, "I have been as far as Mr. Pickerel's cottage, and whilst I was resting myself there, little Billy came running in to say——"

And she told the story.

"Well, it was an accidental meeting," said Mrs. Lovel. "Of course you bade Mr. Grahame good-bye at the door of the cottage, and came straight home."

"No. I went in with him and brushed his coat, because I saw that Mrs. Pickerel hurt his shoulder with her rough hand."

"Brushed his coat! brushed a man's coat! Come, come, you are saying this to frighten me."

"I am not, indeed. Mrs. Pickerel brushed him as if he were her cow, and I

saw him wince, and brushed him myself."

"Very well," said Mrs. Lovel, looking profoundly shocked; "after this, never speak to him again, for he will now feel himself licensed to take liberties."

"Auntie, he is a gentleman—indeed he is. His fall was a terrible one. I was grieved to see him in pain, and I am sure you would have been made angry by the way Mrs. Pickerel brushed him."

"And how long did you remain with him alone in Mrs. Pickerel's cottage?"

"Not very long. He told me something that vexed me so much, I could scarcely prevent myself from crying."

"Of course!" responded Aunt Lovel, sarcastically. "When a young lady brushes a gentleman's clothes, he deserves that he should make her cry. How could he let you do such a thing? No gentleman would have allowed it."

Any rebuke from her aunt gave Jessie pain. She loved the old lady so well, that it was a real grief to be chided by her.

"Auntie," she cried, "it was not his fault that his horse fell with him, and I couldn't help being on the spot when the accident happened. Don't be angry with me, nor think that he did not treat me with as much respect as if we had been in a drawing-room full of people, because I insisted on brushing his clothes and preventing his poor shoulder from being hurt by Mrs. Pickerel. He was very grateful to me for my sympathy, and what he said to annoy me did not come from him, but a person who had no right to tell such a wicked story."

"Do you mean to say that people are telling wicked stories about you?" exclaimed Mrs. Lovel, who abhorred scandal as human nature's most diabolical contrivance of malice.

"Yes, he told me that he had heard I was engaged to be married."

"Engaged to be married!!"

"To Mr. Andrews."

"To whom?"

"To Mr. Andrews."

There was a pause while the old lady stared at her niece.

"And the cruellest thing of all," said Jessie, restraining herself from bursting into tears with a prodigious effort, "is, that it was Mr. Andrews himself who told this wicked story to Mr. Grahame."

Had anybody burst breathlessly into the room to say that the Archbishop of Canterbury had just been committed to Maidstone Gaol for bigamy, Mrs. Lovel could not have looked more dismayed.

"The man's mad! impudently mad!" she cried. "Engaged to you! why, he scarcely knows you."

"I can't guess his object," said Jessie.

"It was Mr. Grahame's invention. You had brushed his clothes, and he felt privileged to laugh at you."

"He was quite in earnest. He would no more have said such a thing for fun than he would have set fire to Mrs. Pickerel's cottage," answered Jessie, with great intensity of feeling.

"I'll speak to Mr. Lockfield about this," said Mrs. Lovel, passionately. "How dare any young man take such a liberty as to couple your name with his own?"

"It wasn't Mr. Grahame's fault; *he* had nothing to do with it. I forget what made him mention it. I only remember that it came out quite naturally, as if he had no doubt of the truth of Mr. Andrews' barefaced falsehood."

And the colour glowed in her cheeks, and her eyes sparkled, and her lips pouted as she recurred to the odious statement. Even had Mr. Andrews been good-looking

in her opinion, had she liked his manners, his style of conversation, she would still have resented his unwarrantable remark—whether spoken in jest or earnest—as an immense liberty. But in her opinion Mr. Andrews was not good-looking; there were suggestions of character about him she did not at all relish, and to hear it repeated that she was engaged to be married to him was exquisitely mortifying.

However, there was nothing more to be said on the subject to her aunt just then; the old lady was really too agitated to argue: it was bad enough that Jessie had been alone with a man in a cottage remote from human habitation and that she had brushed his clothes; I say, that was bad enough; more than Mrs. Lovel's most sanguine terrors would have dared to anticipate. But to superadd to this heavy misfortune the affliction of a baseless piece of gossip, was to convert the incidents of the

afternoon into a visitation from heaven, and to make the day a memorable one in the annals of the old lady's quiet life.

Now it ought to be said here, that Jessie would not have felt Mr. Andrews' falsehood so severely, had it been repeated to her by any other person than Mr. Grahame. Ha! why do we start? Do we, whose acute minds never miss the shadow of a hint, see something in this suggestion to make us thoughtful? I do, for one. I behold in Jessie a heroine with a heart not so absolutely unimpressionable as the liquid quality of her innocence has sometimes tempted me to imagine her. For instance, I had conceived that nature in enduing her with a lively and profound affection for dumb animals, would have limited her emotional capacities to that sort of passion, and disqualified her from finding anything particularly agreeable in two-legged animals in waistcoats and cravats, whose chief supe-

riority over their brethren of the fields and woods lies in their greater power of doing mischief.

But see: at a family dinner given by Peter Andrews at his residence, Springfield House, Jessie is introduced to a young gentleman named Robert Grahame, whose knowledge of her papa, coupled with a very agreeable face and pleasing manners, sensibly prejudices her in his favour. Meeting him next day under circumstances eminently qualified to summon into activity her womanly instincts of pity and sympathy, she finds something even more pleasing in him than she had the evening before taken notice of: his voice is soft and caressing; his eyes kind and honest; his cheeks brown and manly; his hair dark and abundant; his figure upright and martial; his profession of all the professions the one she most loves. The wound in his shoulder, received under a tropical sun, from the

dusky hand of a snuff-coloured savage, adds a quality of heroism to the many agreeable characteristics that assist in establishing his image in her mind. Since, then, she could view him in this light, and find so much to admire, wasn't it quite rational that when she went to her bedroom—leaving her aunt chewing on the unexampled troubles which had suddenly overwhelmed her—she should take a chair near the window and gaze pensively upon the blue sky, her anger against Mr. Andrews yielding rapidly to the vague, soft, spring-like fancies that take shape in her heart?

CHAPTER V.

A "ROW" AT THE RECTORY.

SOME days passed without bringing Mr. Lockfield to Mrs. Lovel's house. Then the old lady met Mr. Mahony, and heard that her little friend was confined to his room with a severe cold.

Hearing this, Mrs. Lovel pushed up the High Street, turned down the road leading to St. Mary's Church, and knocked at the Rectory door.

"How is Mr. Lockfield to-day? I am sorry to hear that he has been ill."

"Thank you, mum, he is a little better."

"Does he still keep his bed?"

"No, mum; he is in his study. Won't you walk in?"

"You may tell him I am here; but beg him not to allow me to intrude if he doesn't feel strong enough to receive visitors."

The old lady remained in the passage while the servant delivered her message. Presently forth from the door through which the servant had passed, stepped a little figure clad from neck to feet in a flowered dressing-gown, and a velvet cap drawn over his head.

"Dear Mrs. Lovel, pray come away out of that cold passage," exclaimed Mr. Lockfield's voice, not unfamiliar to the old lady's ear, though strangely disguised by hoarseness. "Excuse my singular attire. I could not possibly be visible to any lady but you."

And he spoke the truth; for he needed but a covering to his great face to be absolutely invisible to Mrs. Lovel.

"Don't let me intrude—don't let me intrude. I just called—"

"Walk in, pray walk in. Here is a good fire. You are very kind to have come so far."

And he ushered her into his study, where, to her dismay, was Mr. Andrews.

"How do you do, Mrs. Lovel? Glad to see you," said the young gentleman.

Mrs. Lovel took his hand somewhat frigidly. Mr. Lockfield bustled about with uncommon energy for an invalid, drove an arm-chair to the fire, into which he as good as pushed the old lady, and pulled a hassock from under the table, which he set at her feet.

"I dare not take off my cap for fear of neuralgia," says he—

"Pray keep it on," cries the old lady.

"I am out, as you may conceive, to everybody else but yourself, and Mahony, and Andrews."

"I had no notion you were ill, Mr. Lockfield."

"I have been suffering from an oppressive cold since last Tuesday. Unless I am better by Sunday, Mahony will have to take the three services. Pray remove your shawl—you will find no benefit from it if you keep it on. I hope Miss Marchmont is quite well?"

"Quite well," answers Mrs. Lovel, unpinning her brooch and letting fall her shawl. "You will please make our excuses to Miss Andrews," says she, addressing the clergyman's young friend, "for our not having called upon her. We hope to have the pleasure of leaving our cards on Monday."

"Oh, don't talk of leaving your cards, Mrs. Lovel. The more informal you are

with us the better. I was only just now asking Lockfield what had become of you and Miss Marchmont. I called last Tuesday, but was unfortunate enough to find you both out.

"Yes. We found your card on our return."

"I am every day in Sandhaven," says Mr. Andrews, "but never have the luck to come across Miss Marchmont—I mean you and Miss Marchmont."

"I don't permit my niece to gad about the streets," responds Mrs. Lovel icily, "not because she is likely to act contrary to my wishes in any respect, but because I have no desire—*no* desire I assure you—to hear her made the subject of idle small-talk."

Andrews glances at Mr. Lockfield, as much as to say, "What's in the wind now?"

"Small-talk, Mrs. Lovel!" cries the

clergyman. "You don't mean to say you think there is anybody in Sandhaven vicious enough to make Miss Marchmont a subject of small-talk?"

"Yes, I do," responds Mrs. Lovel with an agitated nod, and speaking in tones tremulous with significance.

"I should like to hear anybody mention her name disrespectfully, that's all," says Mr. Andrews, looking as fierce as fluffy hair and pale eyes will allow him.

"Perhaps, Andrews, Mrs. Lovel may have heard that some vulgar person *has* had the audacity to discuss Miss Marchmont," exclaimed Mr. Lockfield solemnly. And then turning excitedly to Mrs. Lovel he calls out, "Tell us what you have heard, ma'am, and if possible give us your authority, that Andrews may be made happy by the opportunity of proving to Miss Marchmont to what lengths he is prepared to go for her sake."

"Yes, yes, Mrs. Lovel, pray tell me what has been said against Miss Marchmont."

"What do you mean, sir?" shrieks the old lady. "Why do you put words in my mouth? I never said that my niece had been spoken against. Jessie might live a hundred years in a town and not provoke a single remark—a single remark—except from persons who loved lies better than truth!" And she snapped her fingers with a loud report. She was indeed very nearly in a rage. She thought Mr. Andrews the most impudent young man she had ever heard of, to sit there frowning so fiercely, and pretending to be so angry, because Jessie's name had been discussed, when he must know in his heart that *he* was the criminal—that *he* was one of the persons she meant who loved lies better than truth. Nor — though she would not suffer her mind to think ill, for a moment, of Mr.

Lockfield—could she make out what he meant by pretending not to understand her. Had not Jessie said that Grahame had told her Mr. Lockfield was present that night and grinned when Andrews told him he was engaged to Miss Marchmont? Had he forgotten the circumstance? Had Grahame mistaken and fancied the clergyman was present?

"But who are these people who love lies better than truth?" says Andrews, quailing before the steady glare of Mrs. Lovel's spectacles.

"Tell us first, Mrs. Lovel, what has been said," observes Mr. Lockfield, watching her uneasily, and speaking with increased hoarseness.

"Mr. Lockfield," says she, addressing him exclusively, so that Mr. Andrews might have been a chair or the coal-scuttle; "it has been said that my niece is engaged to be married."

"Eh?" bawls Mr. Andrews, turning pale and stretching his head forwards.

"Engaged to be married," Mrs. Lovel repeats, concentrating the full force of her spectacles upon Mr. Lockfield's velvet cap.

"To whom, pray—to whom?" asks Mr. Lockfield very hoarsely.

Mrs. Lovel's spectacles travel slowly from the clergyman's cap to Mr. Andrews's boots.

"To your friend Mr. Andrews," she answers sardonically, and with a freezing bow that was dreadfully sarcastic in its politeness.

"Ha!" says Mr. Andrews.

Mr. Lockfield holds up his hand with a smile that, fed with any other diet than water-gruel and dry toast, would have been ineffably rosy.

"If that is all," says he, "where is the need of resentment?"

"But it isn't true!" cries Mrs. Lovel.

Mr. Andrews folds his arms and smiles with martyr-like resignation.

"Though it isn't absolutely true, you can scarcely call it scandal," continues Mr. Lockfield; and he looks at his young patron with uplifted eyebrows that say—"Scandal, indeed! pshaw! a very handsome compliment, rather."

"But it came from one who knew, when he said it, that he wasn't speaking the truth; and that's where the scandal lies—that's where the aggravation is, Mr. Lockfield."

And now Mr. Andrews remembers all on a sudden what he had told his cousin. To do him justice, he had entirely forgotten that remarkable falsehood; which may, perhaps, serve to suggest to the judicious reader that he was not habitually a strictly veracious young gentleman; for a man who tells lies often easily acquires the habit of forgetting the falsehoods he is guilty of.

But no sooner did it flash upon him that he had reported to Grahame that he was engaged to Jessie, than he began to wonder who on earth could have told Mrs. Lovel of that boast. Mr. Lockfield? His face was all candour and surprise. Bessie? No, Mrs. Lovel could not have seen her since the night of the dinner.

"And who told this little fib, Mrs. Lovel?" asks the clergyman.

"Mr. Andrews," says Mrs. Lovel.

Mr. Lockfield looked at his young friend. He too remembered now that young friend's injudicious remark; and that he had laughed at it, treating it rather as the expression of a wish than a deliberate falsehood. He was mellow with wine, rosy with whisky and water, when that observation was made, enjoying the hospitality of the speaker, in no humour to deal harshly with light equivocations, sympathizing with the feelings that had bred the boast, and

dismissing it from his mind as he would a joke.

"Mrs. Lovel," says Mr. Andrews, with the austerity of a guilty man, "will you have the kindness to tell me what I am reported to have said about Miss Marchmont?"

"You told Mr. Grahame that you were engaged to be married to her."

"And did he tell you?"

"No. He told my niece."

Mr. Andrews's eyes sparkled; the blood came into his head, and filled the veins about his forehead and neck.

"What has he to do with your niece?" he inquired with a voice very nearly as husky as the clergyman's.

"I consider," says Mr. Lockfield, "that Mr. Grahame has acted very ungentlemanly in repeating a remark that was made in a pure spirit of fun. I should never have smiled had I thought it signified anything

more than a young man's frolicsome desire to mystify his relative."

And having said this he pulls off his cap, twists it with much warmth of gesture, and claps it on his head again very much on one side.

"I consider the remark unwarrantable," exclaims Mrs. Lovel. "When Jessie came in she looked as if she had been crying."

"Came in from where?" calls out Mr. Andrews imperiously. "Do they meet?"

"Meet! What do you mean, sir?"

"When did Mr. Grahame see Miss Marchmont, to tell her what I said?"

"The day he fell off his horse."

"Oh! he told me his horse—*my* horse—had fallen with him, but he said nothing about having met Miss Marchmont."

"I don't like it! I don't like it!" cries Mr. Lockfield, shaking his head, and looking like a weird baby, with his smooth face crowning his dressing-gown.

"Don't like what?" demands Mrs. Lovel violently, for what with her nervousness and her indignation, she has lost all control over her voice and gestures.

"I don't like the idea of these young people meeting and saying nothing about it."

"Jessie told me about it the moment she returned. She was at a cottage near the spot where Mr. Grahame's horse fell. That's how they met."

"And then," says Andrews, "I suppose he told her what I had said?"

"Yes."

There was some wine upon the table, and Mr. Andrews poured himself out a glass. He then went to the window and looked out, keeping his back turned.

"I am sure, Mrs. Lovel," says Mr. Lockfield, "you will, on reflection, acquit Mr. Andrews of any wish to say one word of Miss Marchmont that should cause either

you or her pain. I was present when the remark you allude to was made, and though I should have instantly witnessed its injudiciousness, had I suspected that there was the least chance of its being repeated, yet, knowing well the feelings that dictated it, how entirely it was prompted by an emotion the most flattering a man can entertain for a lady, I confess I heard it with a smile, nay, with a hearty wish that the very amiable desire it expressed might speedily be realized."

"I assure you, Mrs. Lovel, that Lockfield speaks the truth," says Mr. Andrews quickly, turning from the window. "If I didn't heartily admire your niece, and wasn't deeply in love with her, such a silly remark as that couldn't have escaped me. I said it because I believe Grahame to be a very heartless flirt, who wouldn't scruple to make love to a girl just as a pastime while he stayed in England,

without having the least intention of marrying her; and so I thought if I told him that your niece's affections were already engaged —and that was what I meant by saying she was engaged to me—the law of honour would prevent him trifling with her heart."

Mr. Lockfield looks at Mrs. Lovel as much as to say :—

"*Could* any apology be more satisfactory —more irresistible ?"

"Mr. Grahame is quite a stranger to me," says Mrs. Lovel, who is sensibly softening under the combined influence the gentlemen bring to bear upon her, "and I repeat I was exceedingly displeased to hear him talking such nonsense as that you were engaged to my niece. If you are engaged, sir," she adds, gazing with piercing eyes at Mr. Andrews, "Jessie has not mentioned the subject to me."

"The whole affair seems to me to appear a very suspicious one," exclaims Mr. Lockfield. "The lonely cottage—the horse's fall—Miss Marchmont's sympathy—Mr. Grahame's conversation—constitute a circumstance which, I repeat, seems to me a very suspicious one. I don't at all like the notion of Mr. Grahame's mentioning an innocent observation, a mere precautionary remark, as if it were a scandalous libel. Surely he does not wish to prejudice her against a gentleman whose views, so far as she is concerned, are of the most delicate, flattering, and honourable nature ?"

And he turns to his young patron with a glance that, somehow, has the effect of causing that gentleman to look round for his hat.

"I can't tell you, Mrs. Lovel," the young patron says, "how much I deplore this unfortunate misunderstanding. I wish to stand well in your opinion, and I think it

very hard that a reckless remark should be repeated and misconstrued so as to make me contemptible in your eyes, and something worse, I dare say, in your niece's. If I wasn't very fond of Miss Marchmont, I wouldn't have spoken. But I wanted to protect her against a man who, I am quite sure, isn't honourable, although he's my cousin. He can't be principled. What injury have I done him? I have offered him the use of my house as a home whilst he is in England; and yet the very first thing he does is to try to undermine me behind my back!"

And in a very great rage, he bows passionately to Mrs. Lovel, and leaves the room followed by Mr. Lockfield. They have a brief conversation in the hall, and then Mr. Lockfield returns to the study with an extraordinarily grave face, sits down and stares at Mrs Lovel.

Mrs. Lovel stares at him.

"I very much regret, very much regret," says he, a melancholy cadence giving a peculiar colouring to his hoarse voice, "that you should have thought it worth while to view this matter in so serious a light. Mr. Andrews has left my house violently agitated, and scarcely dares to entertain any hope of ever standing well in your esteem again."

"He is needlessly alarmed, Mr. Lockfield. I am bound to accept his explanation and apology, when he is supported in both by you. He had, probably, taken too much wine when he spoke."

"He had. After you had left that night, the spirits were served in the drawing-room, and I distinctly remember him drinking a tumbler of Scotch whiskey and water before he uttered that observation."

"But it was a falsehood, Mr. Lockfield?"

"True; but consider, there are various degrees of falsehood. There is the falsehood spoken in malice with intent to do injury. That is past praying for. But then there is a falsehood which is rather a boast than a lie — a confident assertion made in good faith and based on probabilities. Mr. Andrews hopes some of these days to marry your niece. He is very deeply in love with her, and his jealousy was excited that night by the unequivocal interest Miss Marchmont appeared to take in Mr. Grahame. He seems to have but a poor opinion of his cousin's character, and wanted to protect your niece from any nonsense Mr. Grahame might whisper, by giving out that her affections were already engaged. I consider the stroke eminently political and ingenious, and—if you insist upon having my full opinion—justifiable."

"Who is this Mr. Grahame? I am very sorry we ever met him."

"He is a lieutenant in the Indian army. Of course you are aware that military men are proverbial for the laxity of their conscience in their dealings with ladies?"

"I certainly never have heard much good spoken of them," says Mrs. Lovel, uneasily.

"As you once truly observed—they are for the most part gentlemen; but this is rather for the world to lament than to be pleased with, for it makes them more dangerous to the susceptible among your sex. Bulls and women, Mrs. Lovel, are equally, though differently, affected by the sight of a red coat, and——"

"What do you mean by women?" interrupted the old lady, warmly. "I don't think it is proper to make the whole sex responsible for the taste of a few silly, imprudent girls."

"Oh! there's no doubt that young ladies are very fond of officers."

"Well, I can't help that," says Mrs. Lovel, grasping her shawl.

"But I want you to consider, that unless we are all very careful, Mr. Grahame may supplant Mr. Andrews with Miss Marchmont."

"Supplant! how? there is no engagement—no love. As to Mr. Grahame—nonsense! it's too ridiculous. They have only met twice."

"But how long do you think it takes young people to fall in love? A day—an hour—a moment, ma'am! It is a look—a smile—a sigh—and the thing's done."

"Are you talking of *love?*"

"Yes, *love!*"

"And you mean to say there are people in this world willing to marry after looking at each other?"

"Yes—and Andrews is one of those people—and take care Grahame isn't

another. You forget that your niece is very pretty."

"But I don't forget that she is not an imbecile."

"But she's very amiable, and sweet, and innocent; and if a man like Mr. Grahame —whom, for aught we can tell, she may admire, and whom she is certain to like, because he is in her papa's profession —should make love to her, ten to one if she isn't conquered by his blandishments."

"No," cries Mrs. Lovel, sternly, "she wouldn't be such a fool."

"Love has turned wiser heads than hers," says the clergyman. "For my part, I confess to a feeling of uneasiness. I should like to see young Grahame off to India. I have set my heart upon hailing Miss Marchmont as the mistress of my young friend's beautiful house and large fortune, and would give a great deal to see you

incline to my way of thinking, and help to establish her in a splendid position."

Mrs. Lovel shakes her head, and removes her spectacles.

"They scarcely know each other," says she.

"Suppose at this moment," says Mr. Lockfield, tragically, "Mr. Grahame is with Miss Marchmont?"

"Pray don't put such ideas into my head," cries the old lady, making a movement as if she were about to start to her feet.

"Suppose," continues Mr. Lockfield, "your niece should come to you one day and say, 'Aunt, Mr. Grahame has asked me to marry him; I love him dearly, and if I mayn't have him I'll have nobody else.'"

Mrs. Lovel waves her hand to silence him; but Mr. Lockfield pursues his theme with dogged hoarseness.

"Hearing this, you naturally make inquiries into Mr. Grahame's position, and find that he has nothing but his pay to live on—that if he marries your niece he will be obliged to carry her into the wilds of India, into the jungle, ma'am, subject her to a thousand trials and discomforts, and eventually yield to her entreaties to let her return to Europe, where she arrives without her natural protector, and where her beauty—but no!" says he gloomily, "I dare not go on—the picture grows too harrowing."

"I think, Mr. Lockfield, you are behaving very cruelly towards me in filling my mind with such horrid fancies," exclaims Mrs. Lovel passionately, but with a moving underlip that marks the existence of a spring of tears not very far beneath the surface.

"Both you and Mr. Andrews are my friends, and I can have no other motive in

speaking candidly than the wish to serve you," replies Mr. Lockfield.

"At all events," says Mrs. Lovel, adjusting the brooch in her shawl, "Mr. Grahame is not likely to remain here long enough to make me uneasy."

"I don't know—he may be here for six months."

"I can't help it!" cries the old lady, rising, and bringing her foot to the ground with a little stamp. "Jessie must take care of herself. I cannot have my life made a burden to me. I told you how it would be when you advised me to receive her. There has been nothing but arguments about love and such trash since she came to Sandhaven. I am allowed to think of nothing else. Even *your* head is full of it. First it is Mr. Andrews, then it is Mr. Grahame, by-and-by it will be somebody else. Can't we leave the child

alone? She is a good girl. She is as innocent as a baby. Her sole companions are her goat and I. I don't believe she ever thinks of marriage. Call France immoral! I do think Sandhaven worse, for in France nobody seems to have discussed such a topic as love before her; whilst here, scarcely has she shown her face, when two young men fall to hating each other about her, and all your time and mine is taken up in arguing upon a subject that ought to have been forgotten twenty years ago!"

Mr. Lockfield smiles, and says hoarsely that it *does* seem ridiculous; but still, he can't help thinking that it would be a grand thing for Jessie if she married Andrews, for it would set Mrs. Lovel's mind perfectly at ease on the score of the girl's future, and make his own position doubly secure and comfortable, since so amiable a patroness as Jessie would hardly fail to

support him in his ecclesiastical projects and parish work.

"Think," cries he, "of the good it would be in her power to do as Mrs. Andrews! My church wants a new organ badly, as you know. The roof of the building also wants seeing to. This house is by no means so commodious as it could be made. The Free School wants a wing added to it. It is a standing reproach to the town that there is no infirmary. Our wants—the wants of Sandhaven—are innumerable. Give me Miss Marchmont as a colleague—give me your niece as the squire's wife to work with me—and I will venture to say, that not only will I have recovered in one year the popularity that Mr. Minto has filched from me—yes, ma'am, filched by unworthy artifices from me—but that I will establish her name as the great benefactress of Sandhaven, the loved of the

poor, the most conspicuous prop of the Established Church in Kent!"

And gazing earnestly upon Mrs. Lovel's impressed face, he rings the bell for the servant to open the hall door.

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

LOST in thought, Mrs. Lovel turned into the High Street, and walked in the direction of her house.

There was certainly no kind of argument that Mr. Lockfield could have made use of so well calculated to affect and influence her, as the reference to the good it would be in Jessie's power to do as the squire's wife. The truth of Mr. Lockfield's observation that Sandhaven had many wants, was undeniable. How often had Mrs. Lovel longed for the means to supply

them! As Mr. Andrews's wife, Jessie would occupy a first-rate position in the town. She would set the fashion. Her name would top all charitable lists; all charitable undertakings would be under her patronage. Her influence over her husband might be nobly directed to the good of the town. An organ *was* wanted for St. Mary's church. The Free School *did* want a wing. The absence of an Infirmary *was* a standing reproach.

Mr. Lockfield was quite right. Sandhaven was full of wants.

The amount of good Jessie would have it in her power to do as Mr. Andrews's wife, was not to be calculated. There was no question that Mr. Andrews was in love with her. Hadn't he confessed it? Mr. Andrews had his faults, no doubt; but mightn't Jessie fall in love with, and marry, a man without any principle at all? And after all, what *were* Mr. Andrews's faults?

Mrs. Lovel didn't know anything against him. He was hospitable and generous; he was a fairly regular attendant at St. Mary's; he had a most virtuous and charitable sister; he was rich: and a wise and affectionate wife would not surely find it hard to make him benevolent.

And certainly the mere fact of his being so fond of Jessie was a great argument in favour of her happiness should she marry him. Suppose she should go and fall in love with Mr. Grahame? Here was a young man of whom Mrs. Lovel knew nothing. She had heard him called unprincipled—perhaps he was. He was undoubtedly poor. His mother had married twice—a fact as much against him in Mrs. Lovel's opinion, as Bessie's virtues were a fact in favour of Mr. Andrews. He was in the army, and Mrs. Lovel distrusted military men. Whoever he married would have to go with him to India, live by day

on rice, and lie by night in fear of tigers, sleep with snakes under the bed, and at last die of the cholera.

Now Jessie might fall in love with such a man, and enter hand in hand with him into a boundless prospect of jungle and jackalls, enlarged livers and ebony-coloured assassins. *Then* would Mrs. Lovel ever forgive herself for snubbing Mr. Andrews and keeping her niece out of two thousand a year, and the delightful privilege of silver-trowelling the foundation-stone of an Infirmary amid shouts of applause from the maimed, the crippled, and the blind?

Deeply meditating these matters, the old lady pushed open her garden-gate, and knocked on the door. It was opened by Jessie.

"I saw you coming, aunt. At least Mr. Grahame did, who was near the window. What a long walk you have had! You have been out since——"

"Did you say Mr. Grahame, niece?"

"Yes, he is in the parlour."

Mrs. Lovel looked at the hall chair as if she meant to fling herself upon it. Then raising her voice from no other motive than to overcome the difficulty of articulation, she called out—

"How long has he been here?"

"Since four," answered Jessie, in a whisper, and feeling mightily embarrassed to think that Mr. Grahame must have heard the question.

Mrs. Lovel felt with a trembling hand at her waistband, pulled out her watch, and exclaimed—

"And it's now five!"

And then she remembered Mr. Lockfield's prophetic remark, "that perhaps at that very moment Jessie might be alone with Mr. Grahame."

She pushed open the parlour door, looked hard at the young officer, who stood near

the window, and dropped him a freezing curtsey — one of those mocking, old-fashioned curtseys, such as we may conceive Lady Teazle executed when she thanked Sir Peter for nothing.

"I certainly did not expect the pleasure of finding you here," she said, her spectacles candidly reflecting the mingled emotions that agitated her soul.

"I called to thank Miss Marchmont for her kindness to me the other day, when my horse fell," replied Mr. Grahame, in a very self-possessed manner, and scarcely able to restrain a smile at the expression on the old lady's face.

"Oh, yes, my niece told me about that accident, and—and that she brushed your clothes for you."

"She was kind enough to insist upon doing so. She fancied that the old dame at the cottage hurt me."

"And do ladies brush the men's clothes in India for them?"

Grahame felt thankful for the excuse to laugh.

"As often as there is need," said he.

Mrs. Lovel went to the fire and poked it. Grahame looked at Jessie; but she was too frightened to look at him. She stood at the table with a pale face, and her head hung like a child who has been detected in a naughty action, and waits for the rebuke.

The young man's position was painful and ludicrous; but nothing could be more gentlemanly than his apparent ignorance of Mrs. Lovel's rudeness and undissembled annoyance. He resumed his chair, and conversed with her without the least symptom of restraint; spoke of the weather, of the sea, of the improvement in his health, of his accident, of Jessie's sympathy, as affably and unaffectedly as though he had

been in the presence of a dear friend, who loved him, and was enraptured to see him; and then rose quietly, bade the ladies good-afternoon, and left the house.

Mrs. Lovel said nothing to Jessie. What was there to say? Could she have known how to begin, she would have begun as soon as the house-door had closed upon the visitor. But it wasn't Jessie's fault that Mr. Grahame had called, had found her alone, had stayed until Mrs. Lovel had come in. Could Jessie have turned him out? Could she have denied herself to him, when perhaps the servant had admitted him whilst she was upstairs? Could Mrs. Lovel tell her niece never to speak to him again?—that he was unprincipled?—that he was poor? Not yet, at all events. Mrs. Lovel thought, and thought very properly and wisely, considering she was in a rage, that to abuse Mr. Grahame would be to impart a very odious significance to a

matter—an accident—that, left alone, might prove completely insignificant. It was strange, annoying, distressing, that she should come home from such a conversation as she had had with Mr. Lockfield, and with her mind full of grave thoughts on the subject of Jessie and Mr. Andrews, to find the girl alone with the very man against whom Mr. Lockfield had been cautioning her, against whom her own instincts were up in arms. But to reproach Jessie with an accident of which she was entirely guiltless, with a calamity that was not of her bringing about, would not only be in the highest degree unjust, but in the highest degree impolitic.

But, oh! that Mr. Lockfield were at her side to advise her in this her hour of amazement and fear!

Meanwhile Jessie waited, expecting her aunt to "begin." For the first time since she had lived with Mrs. Lovel, she felt

something like a rebellious stirring going on in her heart, and it is exceedingly probable that had Mrs. Lovel "begun," she would have found, to her unutterable astonishment, that not only was Jessie capable of defending herself, but that, on very great emergencies, she could actually be saucy!

But much unpleasantness, and a great quantity of tears, were saved by Mrs. Lovel suddenly leaving the parlour, and trudging to her bedroom, where she proceeded to remove her shawl and bonnet, and meditate the attitude she ought to assume in this unexpected matter of Mr. Grahame and his visit, and what might happen.

And what *might* happen! You mean, dear Mrs. Lovel, and what *has* happened.

It was too late. That long conversation at the Rectory had ruined everything by keeping the old lady away from her home. I say it was too late. Mr. Grahame had

been alone with Jessie from four o'clock till five. They had talked of Colonel Marchmont; they had talked about the French; they had occasionally talked in French; they had talked of India—Grahame had been quartered at the very station where Jessie was born. Grahame talked of the pleasant balls given at the large Indian stations, and exhibited a quality of dry humour in his description of the different treatment received from the ladies by ensigns and field-officers — the ensigns dancing every dance, of course, and field-officers never finding a partner, naturally. That hour had passed as gaily as a holiday. Very often, Jane, in the kitchen, paused in her work of writing a letter to Sandman's assistant—compared to which the cleaning of a rusty steel fender were a trifling labour —to listen to Jessie's merry laughter. Mr. Grahame had been most amusing; had said some very droll things about Sand-

haven, had convulsed Miss Marchmont with a ludicrous description of little Miss Cock (aged fifty), who called for subscriptions to a New Testament Society, and whom Mr. Gibbs the attorney had, after being wearied out by her importunities, put to flight, by telling her he was a worshipper of the Peacock, a Yezidi, a devil-worshipper—a joke that lost him three Methodist clients, and a respectable Jew's and a Plymouth Brother's business.

And mutual admiration had sweetened the visit. What a thorough soldier he looked! What a delightful companion he would have made for poor dear papa at La Force! How could he have any of fluffy Mr. Andrews's blood in him? He was not like other Englishmen, she thought; his teeth were white, his skin sunburnt, his eyes so gentle and honest, that she was never weary of looking at them, his face thin, not square, his dress untainted

by the least flavour of snobbishness, his figure upright, his bearing that of a gentleman.

And what had he thought of her? I don't like to say. What a clumsy artist he is, to be sure, who represents all his characters falling in love at first sight! Of course, such things never happen in real life. Oh, no! In real life no girl ever meets a young gentleman, and admires him after seeing him once, looks without speaking, and speaks without looking, after meeting him twice, and falls in love with him after meeting him three times. Certainly not. This sort of thing happens, you know, in books, but never in real life. Don't interrupt, my child. You, I dare say, are an exception: you loved James the first night you saw him; and twenty thousand like you loved their Jameses too in the same quick fashion; but Mr. Puff's sister took three years to be courted: and so, my

dear, Mr. Puff won't take you as a standard.

No. What I ought to have done in order to prove to Mr. Puff that I am entirely with him in holding love at first sight a gross and scandalous improbability is this: Jessie should have been set walking on the sands when the water is coming up; she should have then been fired with an ambition to collect periwinkles and starfish; she advances upon the rocks, where, while she is bending inquisitively over a crystal pool, watching with infantine delight the pale shrimps sporting, she is overtaken by the sea and surrounded. Now then, agony, help us to thrill Mr. Puff! Come, horror, and with your frown assist us in curdling him! Wild shrieks burst—the water gurgles, cruelly, crawlingly gurgles, touches her feet, and wets her boots.

But look, Mr. Puff! look and breathe!

High above her, eighty feet above her, on the very edge of the beetling cliff, the outline of a manly form is marked against the broad blue heavens. (Puff likes alliteration.) The cruel crawling water meanwhile continues to gurgle and rise. The manly form sees her not, but watches the distant sail, whose white wings . . (here we quote Tennyson). She raises her white, wan face and beseeching hands, and a wild and piercing shriek bursts from her lips. He starts—looks—sees her! Horror, it is Jessie! What are eighty feet of contemptible chalk to a man who beholds his mistress drowning at that distance from him? He jumps—whizzes through the air—the sand trembles as if a ship had bumped. Unable to look, she shuts her eyes; unable to stand up, she falls down and faints. A long interval (expressed by two rows of stars), and then comes the sigh with which we are all so familiar, the

tremulous action of the limbs, of which you have also heard, the parting eyelids—the soft, sweet, shuddering sense that she reclines upon a broad breast—that she is safe—and that Gur—Gur—Grahame has snatched her from the cruel crawling sea that leaps as if exasperated, that foams as if something else, that lashes the bare brown sand, and fearfully froths around the bleak black rocks.

Now, Mr. Puff, nothing would have been easier than to introduce this highly exciting and eminently dramatic episode; it would have cost but a penny bottle of ink, an occasional reference to a volume of English synonyms, and a dozen throes. It would, moreover, have given me an opportunity of exhibiting my powers as a describer of scenery, whether marine or inland, and my knowledge of the heart when wrung by acute horror and dread. Neither could so theatrical a circumstance as this have

failed to give an artistic sanction to Jessie's love for Grahame. The harshest critic could not doubt, that a man who could leap from a height of eighty feet richly deserved to win the girl's affection. But this rescue never took place. Grahame might have been capable of far more wondrous exploits than this leap; and should Mr. Puff question his heroical qualities I will make the young gentleman jump from a balloon in the next chapter, which shall open with a very gorgeous description of a sunset, and of the various colours that decorate the sky during the process. But when Jessie began to like this officer he had not distinguished himself in any way, unless you choose to accept his fall with his horse as an instance of his boldness and spirit.

No, Mr. Puff, the feeling that had sprung up between these two young people owed its origin to the ordinary commonplace

conditions. "A youth or maiden," says Rasselas, "meeting by chance, or brought together by artifice, exchange glances, reciprocate civilities, go home and dream of one another. Having little to divert attention or diversify thought, they find themselves uneasy when they are apart, and therefore conclude that they shall be happy together."

But perhaps we are wrong; perhaps we are anticipating; perhaps Grahame doesn't care for Jessie; perhaps Jessie will marry Andrews, or that Mr. Jones, who still lurks and scowls behind the scenes. I haven't told my story yet. Mr. Puff made me digress; but I profess these digressions are very perilous things, for they not only put a man in conceit with his parts and humour, which may be very indifferent, and tempt him into discussing matters which he knows nothing about, but commonly lead him into explaining his story

before he has related it, and destroying the interest which, up to that moment, it has cost him great intellectual agony to sustain.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. ANDREWS MAKES LOVE.

NOT a word was said to Jessie by Mrs. Lovel about Grahame. The various perplexities under which the old lady had laboured pretty well ever since her niece had come to live with her, were beginning to bear fruit. She was growing more circumspect, less candid. She was finding out that, to play the game of life properly, it doesn't do to let everybody see your cards. There was undeniably a great chance of Jessie's falling in love with somebody or other as time went on; and, strive as Mrs. Lovel might

to oppose the tide of events, marriage really threatened to become a condition of her niece's future.

She reflected that were she to tell Jessie that—if she was determined to have a husband—the best thing she could do was to let Mr. Andrews pay her attention, and, after a decent interval, marry her, the chances were that Jessie would become instantly prejudiced against that gentleman and refuse to witness a solitary excellence in his person, face, fortune, house, position, and the influence she would be able to exercise as his wife, though Mr. Lockfield fell upon his knees to petition her, and Mr. Andrews tore his hair and wept to illustrate his sincerity.

On the other hand, were Mrs. Lovel once to begin to abuse Mr. Grahame, to prohibit her niece from speaking or bowing to him, it was pretty nearly certain that Jessie would fall in love with him at once, deter-

mine to marry him, and, if her aunt objected, elope as Lavinia had done before her. These were the considerations, then, that kept Mrs. Lovel dumb; and I would particularly call your attention to them not only as a proof of her remarkable sagacity, but of the susceptibility of the human mind, even at the age of sixty, to be influenced, quickened, and sharpened by an entirely new and original intellectual phase induced, or injected, or wrought, or what you will—metaphysics are puzzling things —by the power of circumstance.

It was necessary that she and Jessie should call at Springfield House after the hospitality Mr. Andrews had shown them. She had promised him to leave a card on Monday, and would have very cheerfully kept that promise, and even have walked in to see Bessie, if on her return from the Rectory she had not found Jessie alone with Mr. Grahame. But now she abhorred

the necessity of taking her niece to a house where she was likely to meet this young man.

What should she do? Go by herself? Yes, she would walk to Springfield House alone; give hers and Jessie's cards to the servants, inquire after Miss Andrews, and come away.

It happened, however, that being at church on the Sunday preceding the day of the proposed visit, she observed that Mr. Lockfield was absent, whence she inferred that his cold was no better, and so thought she would call on her way home and ask after him. Mr. Andrews went eagerly in pursuit as she and Jessie quitted the church. He had not seen his adored for some time, though he had hunted about the town for her day after day, and cursed the etiquette that prevented him from calling on Mrs. Lovel until Mrs. Lovel had called upon him.

He wanted to walk as far as the lane with them, but the old lady said she was going to see how Mr. Lockfield was. There was nothing to prevent him from calling on Mr. Lockfield too; but he stood too much in awe of Mrs. Lovel to care to appear intrusive. So after exchanging a few civilities with the ladies, all the while looking so tenderly at Jessie that she could scarcely save herself from blushing and pouting, he exclaimed,

"I told Bessie you were going to call on her with Miss Marchmont to-morrow, Mrs. Lovel; and she begged me to give you her love, and to say she should expect you."

Mrs. Lovel said "Very well," meaning the reverse, and hoped in her heart that it would rain.

So they parted, and the old lady, followed by Jessie, knocked at the Rectory door. The door was opened by Mr. Lockfield himself.

"I saw you through the window," said he, speaking in a voice quite hoarse enough to account for his not doing duty. "Walk in—I am very glad to see you. How did Mahony manage?"

"Very well. But we won't walk in. I just called to see how you were."

"Please walk in, Miss Marchmont; set your aunt a good example."

The little man who had discarded his cap and dressing-gown and was dressed like a clergyman should be, held open the parlour door, and the ladies entered. There was a good fire, and Mrs. Lovel drew to it: but she refused to sit down. She dined at two, she said, and had called merely to inquire whether her friend's cold was better.

"Was Andrews at church?" asked Mr. Lockfield, after a brief chat upon Mahony's sermon. He put the question to Jessie, and she answered yes.

"I suppose you know," said Mr. Lockfield, "that Mr. Grahame has left Springfield House?"

"Indeed!" cried Mrs. Lovel; "where has he gone? Not back to India?"

"He is somewhere in the town."

"What made him leave Mr. Andrews?" inquired Jessie.

Mr. Lockfield glanced at Mrs. Lovel with a smile.

"I fancy there was a little quarrel," said he; "Andrews tells me he is somewhat bad-tempered; but my young friend will doubtless give you the story."

His little black eyes twinkled, but observing Mrs. Lovel to look nervous, he dropped the subject by complimenting Jessie on her appearance; but Jessie thought of Grahame, and felt quite sure that Mr. Andrews had told a falsehood in saying he was bad-tempered. If anybody was quarrelsome, Mr. Andrews was.

"We were going to call upon Miss Andrews to-morrow," said Mrs. Lovel. She could make that observation now with extreme confidence.

"I am sure," answered Mr. Lockfield, looking at Jessie, "that she and her brother will be delighted to see you."

Jessie didn't like the confidential manner in which Mr. Lockfield looked at her, nor his mode of personally identifying her with every reference to the Andrewses. She felt troubled about Mr. Grahame, and had a queer idea that he had been ill-used. Indeed, her mood was quite combative enough to have made her stand up for the young officer, had Mr. Lockfield said a word against him. As it was she felt sorry, after she had left the Rectory, that she hadn't contradicted the clergyman when he spoke of Grahame's bad temper.

Mrs. Lovel was more cheerful than she had been since Friday, the day she had

found Grahame in her parlour. It was not probable that Grahame would prolong his stay at Sandhaven now that he had quarrelled with his cousin. His departure would take a load off her mind, and enable her to deal more judiciously with Mr. Lockfield's proposed scheme of a marriage between Andrews and Jessie. If on mature deliberation she should see anything to object to in that scheme, she could oppose it comfortably, unembarrassed by the fear that by denying her niece to Andrews she would be giving her a chance of falling in love with some needy, unprincipled man.

Poor Mrs. Lovel! at the age of sixty she could find no leisure to think of anything else but love and marriage! If she sometimes regretted the peaceful life she led before Jessie came to her, when all her days could be dedicated to the care of her soul's health and the wants of the poor, can you blame her? It is hard enough to be in love

oneself at sixty ; to live over again the feverish, sleepless hours of one's youth, made poisonous now by the knowledge of wrinkles and the inevitable sense of unbecomingness ; but to have to feel those pangs for somebody else, to have to weigh this person's fortune against that person's character, to suspect a leer in every eye, a love-whisper in every breeze, a thirst for matrimony in every heart; not to be able to gaze on the moon without being astounded by a wink; not to be able to have a dream without being smothered in blonde, stunned by the roar of marriage bells, and gasping in unison with the wedding prayers, is, indeed, a melancholy trial which I envy not the maternal heart that can meditate unmoved.

Of course, now that Mr. Grahame's bad temper had made Springfield House too hot to hold him, Mrs. Lovel need not mind taking Jessie to call upon the Andrewses,

but Jessie accompanied her aunt with no willing heart. Whether through her instincts, or through the force of presentiment, or through some metaphysical cause or other, which several pages of the very finest writing adorned with quotations from Herr Kant and Mr. Herbert Spencer, and illustrated with fine plates, might describe without explaining, our little heroine had got hold of the comical idea that Mr. Lockfield and her aunt wanted her to fall in love with Mr. Andrews, and that Bessie was pleased with the notion.

What gave her this very comical idea? Not Mrs. Lovel—she had said nothing. Not Mr. Lockfield—for he had said nothing. Not Bessie—not Andrews. Who then? Did you ever notice that when several people are thinking hard about the same thing, others who are familiar with them get to thinking of that same thing too, albeit one party says nothing of what they

are thinking about to the other party? Isn't thought epidemical at times? Don't you often hear of—I won't suppose that you read—a lot of books appearing at the same time all written pretty much alike, though there is no plagiarism nor imitation? After you have been meditating a subject several weeks or months, aren't you occasionally astonished by finding that the people you live with have been medi tating that subject also? If I am wrong, I apologize. But if it wasn't because Mr. Andrews, Miss Andrews, Mr. Lockfield, and Mrs. Lovel, and, perchance, Mr. Grahame, were all thinking of one thing about the same time that Jessie unconsciously fell to thinking about it too, I have no notion what brought the suspicion into her head.

Possessed of some misty idea of the truth, Jessie felt no pleasure in dressing to pay the Andrewses a visit. Had she believed

that Grahame would have made one of the party at Springfield House, perhaps she would have taken more pains in putting on her hat; perhaps she would have worn the French jacket with the real fur instead of the Sandhaven vestment under which she hid her graceful figure. She had an idea that Peter Andrews must be a rather contemptible person to get a clergyman and an old woman to make love to her, instead of coming forward to learn from her own lips that she never, never, never could care for him more than as a friend. Ha! acrid words! whose ears have they not *once* saluted? whose brains have they not *once* made to boil and bubble?

All the way to Springfield House she thought of Mr. Grahame, and wondered what he and his cousin could have quarrelled about. It must have been a very passionate quarrel to end in making Mr. Grahame leave the house he had meant to live

in whilst he remained in England. She hovered round the subject as she conversed with her aunt, but never had the courage to alight upon it. Had the quarrel originated with Mr. Andrews? Of that she had no doubt. Very likely he had said something coarse and untrue of his cousin, or perhaps he had insulted him for the accident that had befallen his horse. She wondered in what part of the town the young gentleman had gone to live, and would have given anything to have heard the story of the quarrel from his lips before Mr. Andrews related it, because she felt sure then that she would hear the truth and receive nothing into her mind to prejudice it unjustly.

Bessie of course was in—poor creature! she was never out; and Mr. Andrews was also at home. The servant led the ladies into the drawing-room and went away with their cards. Through somebody's neglect

there was no fire lighted in the drawing-room; and Mrs. Lovel shuddered as she seated herself upon a cold satin chair and gazed around the spacious chilly apartment.

"This kind of pleasure-seeking," said she, gloomily, "will, I am positive, end with me in an attack of bronchitis."

"I wonder that the servant should have showed us into a room without a fire," answered Jessie, who felt pettish enough to wish to see her aunt in a bad temper too.

"What should those liveried people know about the cold?" cried the old lady. "They leave a blazing kitchen fire to open the door, and fly back to it. Men-servants may be useful, but I do think them a contemptible race. I can understand a man submitting to be clothed in a uniform; but to voluntarily dress himself every day in livery, to assume pompous airs because he is

allowed to show his calves, makes the indignity of bondage base beyond——"

"How do you do, Mrs. Lovel?" exclaimed Mr. Andrews coming hastily into the room. Then he turned to Jessie and held her hand while he explained that he had been in the stable where the servant couldn't find him or he should have come to her before. "Why, there's no fire, Mrs. Lovel! What an idiot Joliffe must be to show you into a cold room!"

He apologized profusely, told them that there was a good fire in the library and led the way to that apartment.

Had Jessie had a suspicious mind, she might have doubted whether Mr. Andrews hadn't been rather in his dressing-room than in his stable, when the servant sought him. He certainly had the appearance and exhaled the aromas of a man who had not long left the toilet-glass. Of course it seemed more manly and careless to be

among his horses than among bottles of eau-de-Cologne and satin cravats; but then considering that he was in love and that he had been expecting to hear of Miss Marchmont's arrival since three o'clock, there was nothing unaccountable in his choosing to dedicate a leisure hour to the looking-glass. At what period of a man's life does he take more pains with his hyacinthine locks, his whiskers, his collar, boots and finger nails than when he is going to meet the young lady he adores? Tell me, Dorimant, you of her Majesty's War-office, you of the splendid cuffs and ruby-coloured neck-cloth, how long does it take you to soap into the fine and delicate points that mustache, the silkiness of which distinguishes you above all other clerks, when preparing for the ball where Stella is to be—Stella whose lovely features dangle at your watch-chain?

Mr. Andrews looked as handsome as the combined genius of the perfumer, the boot-

maker, the tailor, the hosier and the jeweller working without reference to Nature could make him. He was pleased by the manifest surprise and awe that was impressed upon Mrs. Lovel's face as she looked round upon the pictures, and glanced at Jessie to see if she was equally affected, but found her gazing pensively at the fire. He talked to Mrs. Lovel about those pictures, told her what his father had paid for that gem, and how Lord Margate had offered fifteen hundred guineas for the Poussin yonder near the window. Mrs. Lovel's eyes and head followed the movement of his hand with the implicit automatic action you may observe in country people who attend to what the guide tells them in the Tower of London or Canterbury Cathedral.

But the pictures soon came to an end, and then Mr. Andrews, with an apology for leaving them, said he would go upstairs and see if Bessie was ready to receive the

visitors. Back he came after a short interval, and standing at the door said—

"Bessie wants to know, Miss Marchmont, if you would mind Mrs. Lovel sitting with her a little, as she wishes to have a chat upon matters which she feels sure won't interest you."

Jessie didn't see through it; Mrs. Lovel didn't see through it. Both thought the young gentleman spoke the truth. Both thought that was Bessie's message. Oh, artful, artful Peter! See how love will kick truth out of the road when it becomes an impediment! Mrs. Lovel was completely deceived, followed Mr. Andrews upstairs without reflecting that Jessie would be left alone with her youthful admirer, and was conducted to Bessie, who would instantly have asked where Miss Marchmont was if her brother hadn't stepped forward quickly and whispered that he had kept the young lady downstairs.

"My sister is not very strong," says he, re-entering the library, "and is not always capable of supporting the fatigue of a conversation. I hope you will excuse her for not seeing you."

"But won't my aunt tire her?"

"You see, they have so many subjects in common which they can discuss. There are always poor people and sick people and ragged children in Sandhaven. So Mrs. Lovel and my sister can never want subjects to talk about."

And for about a quarter of an hour he converses with her on any topic that enters his head, the while yearning, but afraid, to hint of the matter that is consuming his heart. At last he says:

"What has become of you lately, Miss Marchmont? I never have the luck to meet you out."

"I am always at Sandhaven," she answers, very wisely not choosing to tell him her

favourite walk, for she knows he would speedily contrive to make it her favourite walk no longer.

"I suppose," says he, "you have heard that my cousin Robert has left us?"

"Mr. Lockfield told us so yesterday. Why has he gone?"

"We had a quarrel. Relatives seldom agree," says he with a laugh.

"Mr. Lockfield implied that the quarrel was owing to Mr. Grahame—was it?"

"Yes. He had tried to do me an injury. I thought he had acted unfairly and ungentlemanly. I told him so, and then we had some words which ended in his leaving the house," says Mr. Andrews warmly.

"What did he do?"

Jessie asks these questions without reflecting that there might be some impropriety in them. She is thoroughly interested in Grahame and everything that concerns him. Indeed the interest she

takes is extremely obvious to Andrews, and annoys him thoroughly.

"Why, I was told he had repeated a foolish remark I made one evening to him about you. If he was a gentleman he couldn't have done such a thing. No man has a right to repeat observations he hears in a gentleman's house. It was an unpardonable remark, and I humbly apologize to you for having made it. But I never dreamt that it would reach your ears. I would have bitten off my tongue rather than have said it, had I guessed it would have been told to you in such a way as to enrage you against me, and make me contemptible."

Jessie blushes to the roots of her hair. She had not suspected that the young men's quarrel had sprung from this. Now she sees the blunder she has made in questioning him, and longs for her aunt to return.

"Will you forgive me?" says he, as tenderly as he can. "It was a heedless remark, although I had a motive in saying it. I have been miserable, and passed sleepless nights, ever since Mrs. Lovel told me about your meeting with my cousin, and what he had mentioned about me."

"He meant no harm. He thought you had spoken truthfully," answers Jessie, longing for the colour to fade off her cheeks, that she may meet his eye, for she thinks he will mistake her confusion for coyness, and presume.

"I believe quite the contrary. He wanted to poison you against me."

"Indeed not!"

"But would any *gentleman* have done such a thing? He knew that—he knew what my—what my feelings are towards you, and, considering that he is my cousin, and was living in my house, his behaviour was most unprincipled. But not more than

I expected. I have heard of his doings in India. I could tell a story or two, I dare say, and could mention a certain officer's name—but it is of no consequence."

"I don't believe he is unprincipled," cries Jessie, more offended by Andrews's vague charges against his cousin than had he loaded him with abuse.

"But you don't know him, Miss Marchmont. He is a member of my club, and a man hears strange stories in the smoking-room of the 'Grantham.' But all this don't signify now. If you'll only tell me that he hasn't made you hate me, I'll forgive him—no, I'll never forgive him—but I'll cease to think of the wrong he did me."

"Can't we talk of something else? My aunt won't be long, I suppose."

"I can't talk of anything else," says Mr. Andrews, gloomily. "You don't know how miserable I've been, how I've thought over this thing, how I've longed to meet you

and ask you to forgive me, and not believe I am half as bad as Mr. Grahame, I dare say, tried to make me out."

"We never spoke of you except when he mentioned what you had said, and asked me if it was true," cries Jessie.

"He had no right to speak of me at all. He did me quite enough injury by letting my horse fall."

"He couldn't help it. You would have fallen too."

"Yes, but I wouldn't have said to a girl I knew he was fond of, 'Oh, I say, do you know that Grahame has been telling lies about you?' Hang it, I wouldn't have said that!" cries Mr. Andrews, passionately.

"He never said such a thing. Why *will* you talk so?" cries Jessie.

"He has made you hate me," says Andrews, with a ghastly look.

"He hasn't."

"He hasn't! and do you really forgive me? and will you let me tell you I love you?"

"Oh, please don't say that! please don't say that!" exclaims Jessie, greatly terrified. "I don't want to be told that. I want you to love your cousin, not me."

"I can't help saying it, Jessie—Miss Jessie—Miss Marchmont!" he calls out, leaving his chair and advancing to the middle of the hearthrug, "I have loved you ever since I first saw you. I never loved anybody but you before. Why did I tell Grahame I was engaged to you? Because I was jealous, and I knew him to be unprincipled. I saw him talking and laughing with you. I wanted to keep him off; and, unknown to me, he tried to turn the tables, and set you against me. What harm have I done? Oh, don't get up! Do listen to me, and say that you don't hate me."

But Jessie gets up in spite of his entreaties. All her roses have faded now. She is as white, madam, as the ceiling of the room in which you read this.

"You—you never told me you were going to talk to me in this way!" she sobs. "I'll go to my aunt."

"Mayn't I tell you that I love you?" he cries out. "Don't go away! If you don't like to hear me talk like this I won't. I can't help being fond of you, and thinking you beautiful, and longing to make you my wife."

"Oh, Mr. Andrews, *please* be quiet! I don't know what I'm to do. Nobody ever spoke to me like this before;" and she pulls out her cambric and hides her pretty face.

"And I don't want anybody ever to do so again!" he cries. "I'd cut anybody's throat who made love to you. I wouldn't stand it. I'm more in love than any man ever was before, and if you won't give me some encouragement, I'll—I'll throw myself off the cliffs! I couldn't live without you now. Ever since I first set my eyes on you, Jessie, I've thought of you as my wife.

Oh, please don't shake your head and sob so! I'd set fire to this house if I thought you wouldn't be mistress of it. You may have everything I've got. I don't want anything but you. Oh, don't shake your head! Why couldn't you love me? Just begin by trying to like me. People I have heard of get on beautifully together, and live like doves, who started at the beginning without affection. Habit will do wonders."

"I never, never could love you," sobs Jessie behind her handkerchief.

"Yes you could, in time. I shouldn't expect much at the commencement. You don't know my character yet. I'm wonderfully patient—ask Lockfield. If I wasn't wonderfully patient, how could I have waited up to now to tell you how I worship the ground you walk on?"

And he tries to take her hand; but this she won't permit.

"Oh, don't touch me—please don't touch me, Mr. Andrews. I'll always be glad to like you, and will ride with you now and then, and let my goat browse in your fields, but I can't do more—indeed I can't do more."

Mr. Andrews lets his hand fall, and turns his head away. Poor fellow! he presents a truly moving spectacle, with his enflamed face, and turned-down mouth, and moist eyes, and utterly disappointed look.

"Perhaps you're fond of Mr. Grahame?" he hisses.

She draws her handkerchief from her face. I must confess there is more anger and scorn than sorrow in her blue eyes, and not half the redness there ought to have been, considering the quantity of tears she is supposed by Mr. Andrews to have shed.

"I don't think him unprincipled," she answers.

"What! crying, Jessie?" calls out Mrs. Lovel from the door. "Mr. Andrews, what do my niece's tears mean, sir?"

"She loves my cousin," gasps Andrews. "He is a fiend! he has made her hate me."

"Mr. Andrews wants me to love him, and I can't," whimpers Jessie. "And it's not true what he says about Mr. Grahame —he's not a fiend, he's an officer."

In her excitement, Mrs. Lovel begins to fan herself with her muff.

"Have you been proposing to my niece in my absence, sir?"

"No! I told her what I told you the other day, that I was fond of her, and she prefers Grahame."

"Grahame!" cries the astonished old lady; "fond of Grahame!"

"I didn't say so, aunt. He's putting words into my mouth. I said Mr. Grahame wasn't unprincipled—that's what I said."

"Mr. Andrews," exclaims Mrs. Love "do you think this a proper time to d clare your passion in? You scarcely kno my niece. You have acted with indecer haste. I never heard of such behaviou To think, whilst I was talking to Miss A drews about parochial affairs upstairs, tha you and my niece should be wrangling he on a subject that proper-minded people r fuse to let their thoughts run on! I a horrified, sir!"

"I told her I loved her, and I'll say s again," answers Mr. Andrews, doggedly.

"I'll certainly speak to Mr. Lockfiel about your conduct, sir."

"I don't care about Mr. Lockfiel Who's Mr. Lockfield? He owes his livin to me! Lockfield indeed! He had bett not interfere! If I can't tell Miss Marc mont that I'm in love with her witho little Lockfield troubling, I'll find anoth rector!" bawls Mr. Andrews, exasperate

by this reference to a man who, he considered, owed him his all.

"Mr. Lockfield is a gentleman!" cries Mrs. Lovel, equally angry; "and as a gentleman he can teach you to know how to behave, Mr. Andrews, and not speak contemptuously of a man of God, sir, nor terrify an innocent girl by presumptuous talk."

"Presumptuous talk!" gasps poor Andrews. "Why, didn't you know I was in love with Miss Marchmont?"

"But why did you choose an opportunity when I am absent of distressing her with your sentiments?"

"What! do you expect me to make love to her before you?"

"I expect that you should consult me, before you make your feelings known to my niece."

"I did! I told you how fond I was of her."

"And pray what good have you done? Made her cry! You ought to be taught that there is a gentlemanly way of making love. A lady is not to be stormed."

"Stormed!"

"Yes, stormed!" quavers Mrs. Lovel.

"Miss Marchmont," roars Andrews, "for God's sake tell your aunt that I didn't storm you!"

But Jessie felt so annoyed with him for calling Mr. Grahame unprincipled, that she wouldn't speak a word in his defence. She glanced towards the door, and pined to get away from the house she now detested.

Mr. Andrews looked as if he longed to be dead. Mrs. Lovel continued for some time to gaze at him through her spectacles with angry and excited eyes; and very angry she would have remained with him had her agitated mind been suffered to deal only with his behaviour. But while she

gazed, she suddenly thought of Mr. Grahame; and in thinking of Mr. Grahame, a fright seized her that Mr. Andrews knew he was right when he charged Jessie with being in love with his cousin. And with this fear came the reflection that Mr. Lockfield might be seriously offended to hear with what severity and acrimony his young friend's honourable and flattering declarations had been resented. And then observing Mr. Andrews' canary-coloured face, and the disappointment and rage that worked in it, she felt that she ought to have treated him with more consideration —at all events in his own house.

"I am willing," says she, "to withdraw the expression about storming, but my niece's tears," she adds, fanning herself with her muff, "made me afraid that you had said more to her than was proper."

"Upon my honour—" begins Mr. Andrews.

"What made you cry, Jessie?" interrupts the old lady.

"Mr. Andrews frightened me," says Jessie.

"I didn't mean to," exclaims Mr. Andrews, looking at her fatuously, and loving her none the worse for her candid dislike of him.

"But how did he frighten you?" cries Mrs. Lovel with a good deal of asperity, for now that her temper is cooling, she feels that she has behaved in a very unladylike manner to Mr. Andrews; and with a consistency of judgment that is entirely characteristic of human nature, is willing to lay the blame of it all upon her niece.

"He spoke as nobody ever yet spoke to me," says Jessie.

"I only told you that I loved you," gurgles Mr. Andrews.

"If that was all, I can't see why you should have cried," says Mrs. Lovel.

"He said that I was in love with Mr. Grahame, and that he was unprincipled, and flew into a terrible rage, and hissed at me," sobs Jessie.

"Hissed!" echoes Mr. Andrews. "You couldn't have heard me properly. I suggested that you might be in love with my cousin, and I said that I thought him unprincipled; but I declare I never hissed nor flew into a passion. You wouldn't look at me. Had you looked you'd have seen I was in anything but a passion."

"And really, Jessie," cries Mrs. Lovel, "suppose Mr. Andrews *did* call Mr. Grahame unprincipled, what has that gentleman got to do with you, that you should stand up in his defence? I don't say Mr. Grahame is unprincipled—and I don't say he isn't. I may have my misgivings and presentiments from what I've heard, but I don't choose to express them. What are his principles to *you?*"

Jessie turned her head aside, and made no answer.

Mr. Andrews and Mrs. Lovel looked at each other. There was a dead silence, and then Mr. Andrews burst out :—

"I was right! I was right! I saw through his game! He wanted to undermine me! There's a man to lodge in your house! There's an officer and a gentleman for you!"

And nothing but Mrs. Lovel's presence prevented him from expectorating the great oath that rose in his throat.

Here Mrs. Lovel began to nod ; she was no doubt rehearsing some tremendous prohibition she meant by-and-by to level at her niece's head, and nodded a passionate approbation of the indignant thoughts which worked in her mind.

"Come, Jessie," cried she, "we have made a very long call. Mr. Andrews, I

am sorry I was so warm. I was deceived by my niece's tears."

"Before you go, Jessie, give me one word of hope," mumbled Mr. Andrews.

"Auntie!" exclaimed the girl piteously, "I told him I would always like him, and that I wouldn't mind riding with him; but I can't love him."

"But I said I wasn't in a hurry—that I had wonderful patience—that I'd wait until you could love me a little bit."

"Come, Jessie," said Mrs. Lovel, whose feet were being turned by this language into lumps of ice, and whose general sensations were not dissimilar from what she would have felt as a witness in the Divorce Court, "it will be dark before we get home. Good-bye, Mr. Andrews."

And seizing her niece she bustled out of the room, and made for the hall door with uncommon agility.

"There!" she cried, bursting into the

highway, "there's a pretty thing to happen to me at my time of life! to be insulting a gentleman in his own house, and to hear him call you Jessie, and make love to you under my nose!"

"I wish we had never called—never known the Andrewses," whimpered Jessie.

"And so do I, for then we should never have known Mr. Grahame." And then utterly forgetting the wise fears that had before restrained her, she exclaimed:—"Niece, I forbid you ever to speak to him! It is enough that there should be *one* man after you with obstinacy enough to make us all wish ourselves transported. I'll not have another. If you should meet him, look at him *so*——"

And the old lady glared into space with so stern and gloomy a countenance, that the very roadway grew the darker under her——

"And pass on!"

"What has he done that I should cut him?"

"Nothing, thank goodness, nothing as yet. Cut him, that he may remain inoffensive."

"I can't—I won't!" sobbed Jessie. "I'll cut Mr. Andrews, if you like, but not Mr. Grahame."

The old lady stopped short, looked at her niece, and then started off again, at so rapid a pace that Jessie had to run to overtake her.

There were some warm words spoken that night at the Rectory. Mr. Lockfield had just parted with Mr. Mahony, the fumes of whose pipe were still to be tasted in the air, and with slippered feet on the fender, was meditating a great number of things, when a smart rap sounded on the door, and presently in walked Mr. Andrews.

What had the young fellow to think of, what to talk of, but Jessie, and how he had declared his love, and how she had repulsed him, and how Mrs. Lovel had insulted him?

Mr. Lockfield could look very sorry when he liked; and his face never wore a more melancholy expression than the one he put on when Mr. Andrews told him his story.

"It was not enough," cried the young gentleman, "that Jessie told me she never could love me, and stuck up for that beast Grahame, but Mrs. Lovel must tumble into the room, charge me with not knowing how to conduct myself as a gentleman, and threaten me with you."

"With me!"

"She said she'd tell you of my behaviour—as if I cared who she told."

"Why will she mix me up in these squabbles?" cried Mr. Lockfield.

"Ah! what a wretched old woman that

is!" exclaimed Andrews. "She humbles me, laughs at me, treads upon me as if I were dirt! How could I ever hope to win Jessie's love with that old creature jeering and sneering at me every time I open my mouth?"

"And yet," said Mr. Lockfield thoughtfully, "if you could only get her to like you, you would not find——"

"Oh, yes, I know—a more sincere friend. Friend! Confound her, if she were only a man—if I could only pull her nose!"

"If you could, it wouldn't do you any good. Don't let us talk about pulling noses. Leave her to me. I will make her your friend. She is a weak old lady, sadly in need of solid counsel. In her heart, I am sure, she is well-disposed towards you, and depend upon it, that when once you have succeeded in winning her esteem, she——"

"Oh, for God's sake, don't tease me with

that useless prophecy. It is all over between me and Jessie, I am sure of that. Had that wretched old woman not come in just at that moment, it might have ended in my leaving a good impression. But it is all over now. I dare say Jessie is bursting with laughter over what I said to her, whilst Mrs. Lovel hardens her yet more by declaring she never saw anybody make such a fool of himself."

"I will venture to say that nothing of the kind is happening," said Mr. Lockfield, earnestly. "Ten to one, if Jessie isn't crying, while Mrs. Lovel reproaches her for discouraging your love. I see that you thoroughly mistake my old friend's character. Let her treat you as she may to your face, I'll wager what you choose that she wouldn't listen to a word said against you behind your back. And I'll answer for this, that should she get the notion into her head that her niece has a hankering

after your cousin, she will be just as eager to see her engaged to you, as probably she would have been opposed to the girl's marriage had she never met your cousin."

"Blow my cousin!" growled Andrews, using a windier term.

"Mr. Andrews—in my presence—if you please!"

"Don't speak of my cousin. If you do, I must swear."

"You are a great deal too hard upon your cousin," said Mr. Lockfield frowning, so that his aspect might continue to harmonize with his rebuke, if his language didn't; "I believe this very gentleman will be instrumental in marrying you to Miss Marchmont. Yes, I do, sir. Only let Mrs. Lovel get hold of the idea that her niece—but I said this before."

"You said what before? I don't understand. What's Grahame got to do with me?"

"Mrs. Lovel will be afraid that her niece will want to marry him. Then her eyes will be opened to your attractions."

"Yes; but I don't want to win a wife in that way!" bawled Mr. Andrews, bursting with jealousy. "Who is this fellow, that he's to be preferred to me? Why, he's just worth his beggarly pay—that's all. It's only his profession that makes him a gentleman. His father-in-law is a tradesman somewhere—a person that sits behind a desk, and takes money, and as to him, though fighting is his business, I'd as lief shoot him as look at him!"

Mr. Andrews' purple face made Mr. Lockfield feel afraid. He smiled, and pooh-poohed, and poked the fire, watching his young patron the while out of the corner of his eyes, and earnestly wishing he would go away.

"Cut him out! cut him out!" he called as cheerily as his fears would let him.

"You have all the audacity, all the appearance, all the money to do it. This is the sort of trial all young men have to go through. Who's to be happy in a world bursting with sin and sorrow? Your wife, when you get her, will not be less dear to you because you won her with pain and labour. If she don't love you now, that need not prevent her adoring you in six months hence. Think of Jack Wilkes and his squint and his triumphs, and keep up your heart! Read Richard the Third, and see how humps and admiration may run together! You don't squint—you haven't a hump—you are——but I'll not flatter you. If it is to be a struggle between you and your cousin, bare your arms, gird your loins, and go in and win. Bad temper and bad words won't help you. The deepest curses won't move her; your rage will only give your rival an advantage over you. Call upon Mrs. Lovel, and show her you

bear no resentment. Humour her: she is old, and her temper is to be forgiven. Don't hide your head in a hole. Don't rush out of the ring, because you have had a fall, and think the people are laughing at you. Your father acted very kindly to me, and you are my friend. My sympathies are with you, and all the help I can give you, you shall have. But if you lose your temper, and swear, and storm, I can be of no use."

"I know you are a very good fellow, Lockfield; but wasn't it mortifying?"

"Perhaps it was; I could have wished she had accepted you on the spot. But you are not fair to her; you haven't given her time to know and like you. You're too impetuous. In these days, you can't catch hold of a young lady, and run away to church with her. There are several processes to be gone through: certain ceremonies, tedious to youth, but of great

worth and importance, all the same. Emotion, my friend, has many phases. There is liking, there is respecting, there is weighing and balancing; these are the prefatorial moods to love: then come the deep sentiments."

"Yes, yes, that's quite right. I don't say I haven't been hasty."

"When," continued Mr. Lockfield, removing his slipper, and toasting his sock, "when passion is confirmed and the enamoured couple haven't any doubt of each other's sincerity, then the relations are to be considered. Generally speaking, there are two fathers and two mothers, a grand mother of an exceedingly obstinate nature hardened into vice by the want of hearing, a rich aunt, who is taught to consider her opinions worth their weight in gold, married brothers and sisters, who think the dignity of the family name of great consequence, the clergyman of the parish, an

aged nurse, and a bosom friend, commonly a female,—all of whom have a voice in the domestic councils. All these people must be unanimous, or the road to the altar will be encumbered with obstacles. You are luckily spared these conditions of the betrothal-period. But Miss Marchmont has an aunt who supplies the place of a whole family. Before you made your passion known to Jessie, Mrs. Lovel would naturally have wished you to speak to her. This is human nature; and therefore, Andrews, before mentioning the subject of love to Miss Marchmont again, first take the precaution to secure her aunt's sanction. Then you may buy the ring and order the bouquets—but not before."

Could a father have given his favourite son better advice?

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. GRAHAME TELLS HIS STORY.

IT may seem strange that Mrs. Lovel did not render her repugnance to anybody making love to her niece more sensible than it was by referring to the comparatively recent death of Colonel Marchmont as a first-rate reason why Jessie could not, for a long time, listen to any proposal of marriage. But the truth is, until the poor bewildered old lady began to believe that unless Jessie married Andrews, she would elope with somebody quite unworthy of her, she never seriously entertained the idea of Jessie marrying at all.

It must be owned that circumstances had conducted themselves with great impropriety and behaved with indecent haste. Mrs. Lovel, though born a great many leagues this side the Tweed, was endued with a real Caledonian love of deliberating. She liked to "take a thought"—which, viewed as a condiment or dish, would occupy her at least a twelvemonth to digest. Any approach to speed in action destroyed her perception of the laws of order. Now, in days when it took a year to sail round the world, there was nothing inconsistent in a mind taking a year to sail round an idea. But when we consider that Mrs. Lovel lived in the days of steam-engines and paddle-wheels, we are bound to confess that her tardiness of mental locomotion was a characteristic that even the Sir Johns and the Sir Thomases of the House of Commons, who vote against everything and swear by old bones, would view

with derision, and sneer at as a nuisance. Marriage, particularly, was one of those matters, in her opinion, which must be viewed at a great distance, and from all points of observation, before approached; afterwards to be inspected more closely with the utmost care and with plenty of provision for immediate flight, should retreat become necessary.

There are misanthropes, perhaps, who will agree with her; wretches of bachelors and sour husbands who would put down marriage altogether; miscreants with so little heart that they can utter shouts of fiendish laughter over Dean Swift's "Modest Proposal," and quote to one another with sneers and nods that cynical writer's opinions on women and matrimony. But twenty times Swift's genius—and, great heaven! what an intellect is here imagined!—supported by the shrill rhetoric of a thousand old maids, and by the hoarse recapitula-

tions of a thousand miserable husbands, couldn't have caused Jessie to stir an inch from the ground paradisiacal on which she had planted her little feet.

Is this understood?

Look! three weeks have elapsed since Andrews told the young lady in Springfield House that he was in love with her. In those three weeks something has happened which Mrs. Lovel has no idea of, which Mr. Lockfield—though he had thought steadily for a whole day over all he knew about the human heart—could not have dreamt of.

It is the old story: it is youth's philosophy:—

> "Sure 'tis better repenting a sin,
> Than regretting the loss of a pleasure."

It is the usual harlequinade: pretty Miss Columbine in a mask: old Mr. Pantaloon dogging her heels: young Mr. Harlequin tripping old Mr. P. up. Observe that sea yonder; go, Mrs. Partington, with

your broom and sweep the nasty surf off the beach that it mayn't wet the floor of your cottage. See yonder river; go, Mrs. Grundy, and check its current with your fat, thimble-worn finger. I say, Mrs. Partington, that your broom won't prevent the waves from rolling: and Mrs. Grundy, that your finger isn't fat and strong enough to dam a mill-race. And if Mrs. Partington can't keep the sea from rising with her broom, and Mrs. Grundy can't keep the river from flowing with her finger, how is Mrs. Lovel, with her prohibitions, to prevent Jessie from loving?

Isn't love as strong a current as any the moon acts upon, as any the steepest declivity precipitates to the ocean? What is going to check it, or who? Relations? Pshaw! aren't mothers-in-law known? haven't they been talked about, written about, hooted at, sneered at, held up as

terrors, denounced as intruders, fooled in comedies, smothered in tragedies, caricatured in raree-shows, ever since Eve was her own daughter's mother-in-law? And do they, and the fear of them and papas, and sisters, and aunts, stop people from loving and marrying? Does the burning of wives in India stop it there? Does the bow-stringing of moon-faced nymphs stop it among the Faithful? Does the Arcadian cant of the French—more efficacious as an antidote to sentiment than the most erotic novels published in this kingdom—stop it in Gaul? Do pokers and magistrates, the marriage-service and breakfast-speeches restrain its current in these parts?

Mrs. Lovel could no more prevent Jessie from falling in love than she herself could take, at will, short flights to the lunar mountains.

She tried, and all she did was to make Jessie hypocritical. Yes: the girl pre-

tended to lose some of her faculties, pretended not to remember, not to see, nor to hear. I say that Mrs. Lovel acted cruelly, cruelly, ma'am, yer know yer did, in making Jessie hide her pretty, blushing face in a mask. There was no need. The girl played an honest part in the beginning; and Mrs. Lovel might have kept her ingenuous, had she not been a silly, nervous old woman.

Mr. Grahame had taken lodgings in Harbour Street, over a confectioner's shop. He had a drawing-room, and the window of that apartment overlooked the street.

Here he was sitting a few days after his quarrel with his cousin, smoking a cigar, thinking — strangely enough — of Jessie Marchmont, and how amazingly uncivil her aunt had been to him when he called. Just opposite the confectioner's shop was a Berlin wool shop; and whilst his eyes were vacantly fixed upon some queer-coloured

canvas stuff that hung in the window, a young lady, whom he instantly recognized, crossed from the pavement beneath and entered the shop.

Without loss of time Mr. Grahame threw his cigar into the fire, seized his hat, and went downstairs, where he lingered for some minutes, exchanging civilities with a girl behind the confectioner's counter, until he saw the young lady come out of the Berlin wool shop, and then he went out.

Jessie coloured up when she saw him; but there was a good deal of pleasure in her smile, and but little embarrassment in her answer to his greeting. He told her he was glad to meet her, as he dared say she had heard about that quarrel he had had with his cousin, and was afraid the truth might have been misrepresented. That was his lodging now; and he pointed to the confectioner's apartments. He

was determined not to leave Sandhaven, because (said he, very artlessly) he found the air agree with him wonderfully, and he should consider it suicidal to leave a place where he was fast making progress to perfect recovery.

Jessie quite understood this, and told him, with the colour still in her cheek, that she should consider him very foolish to allow himself to be driven out of the town by Mr. Andrews.

"Are you comfortable in your new quarters?" she asked.

"Very. I miss Bessie—she and I always got on. However, I feel more privileged in lodgings, and am my own master, which is a great thing."

He then asked her where she was going, and she told him home. But he wanted to talk to her about that quarrel, and begged her permission to walk with her towards her home by the cliffs, which,

he explained, would give him time enough to tell his story.

Jessie thought of her aunt's stern prohibition, but she also remembered that she had told her aunt she *would* speak to him. She blushed, hesitated, wavered—

"We must walk quickly," said she.

"If you wish it, we will," he answered.

And so they went towards the cliffs.

Now the story he told her did not differ very materially from the story Mr. Andrews had told her; but there was this difference in the method of telling: That, whereas, Mr. Andrews had spoken very bitterly of Mr. Grahame, called him unprincipled, and made lurid allusions to ugly club gossip, and doubtful doings in India, Mr. Grahame uttered not a word against his cousin's behaviour, but just related the incident as it had happened, and then made an end.

Jessie noticed his moderation and approved it.

It would appear from what Grahame said that his cousin had burst upon him in a great passion, and asked him what he meant by repeating things out of the house. Grahame assured him that he was not conscious of having done so. Here Mr. Andrews gasped out an oath, and swore that he had set Miss Marchmont against him by mentioning the "joke" he had made, to her. Grahame explained exactly how it had come to pass that he repeated his cousin's remark. Mr. Andrews inquired furiously why he had concealed the fact of his having met Jessie at the cottage. Grahame replied that he never gave reasons for anything he did. Whereupon his cousin told him he had better leave his house.

The effect of this story was not to improve Andrews in Jessie's opinion. She informed her companion that she considered Mr. Lockfield's young friend a very quarrelsome

plainlooking person, and was sorry she had ever been introduced to him. And then in her candid fashion, which may seem queer to read, but which was inexpressibly refreshing and agreeable to hear and see, she added:

"He told me he loved me the other day and made me cry by the way he teased me. I consider him very rude to dare to talk to me like that, for nobody could have less liking for any person than I have for Mr. Andrews."

Grahame received this piece of information with the most gentlemanly gravity. Of course her artless remark was a text upon which he might have said a very great deal to her in a low voice and with a significant smile. Would you have lost such an opportunity, dear Mr. Snob, or you, dear Flutter, who love the staircase better than the quadrille, and are often to be found in the darkest corner of the conservatory

whispering the strangest things, to be sure, to a pleased face behind a fan?

But Grahame wasn't a drawing-room officer: had smelt other powder than that which makes crackers explode; loved and respected simplicity in women immensely; was so much a man indeed—and now, Mr. Puff, look out! for I am going to say something to astound you—was so much a man that there was scarcely any need for him to be a gentleman! Jessie couldn't pay him a more pleasing compliment than speak to him unreservedly.

She did not find it necessary to walk quite so quickly as she had suggested; they took some time performing the detour, though both considered that they must have walked pretty nearly at the rate of twenty miles an hour, so short did the half hour they passed in each other's company seem.

The fact is, they found a great deal to

talk about. Jessie was never tired of hearing of India and of the place where she was born—celebrated for its extraordinary cigars—and Grahame had the power of describing very pleasingly. He spoke French too, with a good accent, and Jessie was constantly deviating into that tongue and feeling as if she were at La Force as she listened to his answers. There was moreover an under-colouring of gravity and earnestness in his manner and language which became him remarkably well.

They bade each other good-bye and she went home.

No notion of concealing this walk with Mr. Grahame ever occurred to her. She found her aunt in the parlour and told her what she had done, and how greatly she had enjoyed her stroll. But Mrs. Lovel worked herself into a rage at once; expressed in violent language her indignation that Jessie should dare to disobey her; asked if she

wanted to see her dead; told her that her nerves were rapidly giving way under the accumulation of troubles, worries, fears and excitement Jessie was heaping on them; and lifted the scene to a tragic height by bursting into tears and threatening to choke.

Now though Jessie was as white as a sheet and trembled violently, her determination *not* to cut Mr. Grahame—no, not even if her acquaintance with that gentleman should silver her aunt's hair with grief—remained perfectly strong. This, knowing her to be characterless, we must accept as a proof of the tenacity of her instincts. Had she felt that Mrs. Lovel had any righteous reason whatever in wishing her to cut Mr. Grahame, her amiability might have done much to set the old lady's mind at rest. But what had Mr. Grahame done that she should cut him? Had he offended her as Mr. Andrews had? stared at her

rudely? made love to her against her will? hunted her with offers of kindness inexpressibly distressing? Mr. Andrews had been guilty of all this, but Mrs. Lovel didn't tell her to cut *him*. If he were not to be cut who deserved cutting, why should Mr. Grahame be cut who didn't deserve it?

She endeavoured to explain to her aunt that the young officer was a gentleman in whose society she felt a thousand-fold more at ease than in Mr. Andrews's. She assured her that her only reason in consenting to walk with him was that he might have an opportunity of telling her his version of the cause of the quarrel between him and his cousin. Mr. Andrews had been permitted to explain, why should Mr. Grahame be denied the privilege?

But the more she talked, the more hostile grew Mrs. Lovel's spectacles, the more bitter her unaccountable prejudice.

How could so much uncharitableness coexist with so much piety?

My pretty Julia, kindly remember how easily disposed the heart is, at sixty, to find fault. Remember, too, the hints that Mr. Lockfield had dropped, on Mr. Andrews's authority, on the subject of Mr. Grahame's morals. Remember Mrs. Lovel's prejudice against marriage, her doubts as to military men, her ignorance of Grahame's past life, doings, breeding, and education. He had nothing but his pay to live on. His mother had married twice. He had allowed Jessie to brush his clothes. He had quarrelled —no matter how—with the kind relation who had offered him his house as a home. Mr. Lockfield did not seem to have a good opinion of him. He was undoubtedly doing his best to make a fool of Jessie, and he regularly attended St. Michael's church.

Ah, Julia, at the age of sixty, may you, having daughters, or nieces, or both, possess

so free, liberal and enlightened a mind that you shall not consider a young man who errs in the matter of money, character and conduct as grievously as our friend Mr. Grahame, totally unfit to be received as a guest in your house and utterly unworthy to be saluted in the street by your offspring.

I repeat that it was Mrs. Lovel's fault—and nobody else's—that Miss Marchmont became a hypocrite and lost several useful faculties. She couldn't cut Mr. Grahame, and her aunt wouldn't let her know him. What then could she do but preserve her friendship for that gentleman and say nothing about her meetings with him to Mrs. Lovel? Come, Mr. Puff, don't let us toss our heads and look nasal. If Jessie had fallen in love with a man whose character pleased her aunt—supposing her aunt had given herself the trouble to find that character out—wouldn't we have

wished her to be true to him, to quarrel about him, to tell stories about him when necessary—I mean, to declare that his turn-up nose was a Grecian, his red hair auburn, his pale eyes full of fire? And why, because such a man happened to be rich and because Mrs. Lovel happened to like him, should we find something admirable in Jessie's devotion, but something mean and unpraiseworthy in her love for a man who wasn't rich and who wasn't liked by her aunt? If one love is commendable, why isn't the other? If Jessie tells fibs to her aunt about Mr. Grahame, she fibs for love's sake, she means honestly, does what a vast number of ladies have done who are now respected in their parishes and have the clergy at their tables, and what probably your daughter, Mr. Puff, is now doing, under your intelligent nose, sir, and whom I hope you'll not love the less when you find her out.

You see, there is no way of stopping this kind of thing. It certainly never is preached against. There is nothing about it in the Commandments. If we could destroy impulse, check passion, root up instinct, empty the cranium of its brains, transmute the heart into lead, or resolve human nature into its primary Darwinian elements, there might be some hope of preventing girls from falling in love with the wrong sort of men, marrying them and living happily. But until some of the above-mentioned changes take place, men will continue to annoy mothers and fathers, and women to be soft and impressionable. And Mr. Puff, shall we be doing any harm if we express the hope that whilst human nature remains what it is, women when they love will stick to their heart's choice, fight for them, tell lies for them, defy everything, including aunts, for them ?

So Jessie, whilst Mr. Puff holds his

shuddering hands to his face, drop on your knees before us, child, make your little confession and receive our absolution; and if our dear Puff's horror be genuine, see, there is a big stone near his square toes, let him pick it up and heave it.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. LOCKFIELD'S ADVICE.

I HAVE shown you how Miss Marchmont and Lieutenant Grahame met after the latter's quarrel with his cousin; but how they managed to meet afterwards, I have no idea.

When you come to consider that Sandhaven is a small town, and that there were three pairs of eyes at least, whose sight—though sharpened by different interests—was singularly acute; and that no suspicion of the real state of things dawned upon either Mrs. Lovel, Mr. Andrews, or Mr. Lockfield, until a pretty long time had

passed after Mr. Grahame and Miss Marchmont had fallen in love with each other, and sworn eternal constancy—you must come to the conclusion that either fortune was very kind or that the lovers were very clever.

However, though we were not at Jessie's heels in those days, we have a fair right to assume, from our knowledge of her nature, that, at the first going off, she met Grahame with great timidity and many promises to herself that she would not repeat the indiscretion; but the deeper she sunk in love, the less indiscreet her actions would appear; we may conceive Mrs. Lovel asking her, with a very steadfast look, where she had walked this morning, and imagine Jessie answering that she had been on the cliffs or on the sands or anywhere else.

Alone?

No—she never said alone. She never told a falsehood. Had her aunt directly

challenged her, she would have confessed the truth. It pleased her to stop short in her replies and let Mrs. Lovel infer what she liked. If Mrs. Lovel was too nervous to boldly grasp the truth by a course of decisive questionings, that was her look out.

There could not be a better place in the world for lovers to murmur their nonsense than the sands at Sandhaven. Protected by the great cliffs behind, and faced by a broad, deserted sea, lovers might sit all day long upon the rocks and meet no other eyes than their own, or the sea-gulls', or now and then a shrimper's. Was it because those meetings were forbidden fruit, or because she was deeply in love with Grahame, that Jessie that bright April morning, when she was first induced by her lover to explore the sands alone with him, tasted a pleasure brighter and sweeter and dearer than her young heart's purest fancies

could have taught her? How soft was the azure sky! how fresh and genial the light breeze that swept across the water and made it smile! To right and left the sand stretched like a carpet, hard and smooth and sparkling. How tender Grahame was! what real love was in the dark eyes that sought hers! There was no kind of embarrassment between them. I don't mean to say that he didn't talk a little nonsense now and then when he took her hand and made some reference to her beauty or to his passion; but he didn't avail himself of a quarter of the opportunities he had for being ridiculous. Perhaps it pleased him to feel that their love was an understood sentiment altogether too ethereal to be weighted with words. Their eyes could frame a better language for it than their tongues; and neither could miss the illumination it gave to their most commonplace remarks nor the

expressive charm it imparted to the intervals of silence between them.

How came their love to grow up so suddenly, and appointments to be granted by a girl so innocent and simple-hearted, and so fond of her old aunt, that not long ago we were boasting that her amiability was too great to suffer her to do anything contrary to Mrs. Lovel's wishes?

But why enter into explanations? why abandon truth for metaphysics? An immense quantity of writing that could not by any possibility help this story forward an inch, may be saved by your asking yourself a few questions:

"What made me fall in love with James or Maria?"

"How came it to pass that, before three weeks or a month had elapsed after I met her or him, we were meeting each other alone in the square, or in the street, or in the park?"

"What caused me to write those extraordinary letters over which I have spent hours, with a dictionary of quotations from the poets and a 'Maunder's Treasury of Knowledge' on one side of me, and several quires of cream-laid note-paper on the other side?"

"What made me so absurdly careful in my attire?"

"What made me sit for my likeness so often? and buy gloves and scent for somebody else?"

"Why was I so polite to the mother I disliked? why did I laugh so heartily over papa's stories, which now distress me with their insipidity?"

"Why was I constantly taking the little brothers to the play, or calling the sisters 'dear,' and showing them how to cut out patterns, and imploring my brother to be polite to them?"

If you don't know what caused you to

commit these and a thousand greater absurdities which recur to you at fitful intervals, and make you blush over the tremendous hypocrisy you were guilty of—if you don't know why papa's threats made you more determined to marry Maria—or mamma's tears the more resolved to marry James—how should I be able to account for Jessie's conduct, or find a reason for what every human being of a certain age will consider in the last degree unreasonable?

Are you fond of love-scenes? do you like to read about blushing cheeks upon manly bosoms, of sobs of passion and tears of happiness, of brief, rapt glances, and of kisses sealing vows every bit as securely as yonder twopenny stick of sealing-wax will keep that envelope from betraying its contents?

Grahame ought to have made love more copiously, violently, and poetically, that he

might give the author the opportunity of producing one chapter at least of very elegant writing. He knew French; and how grateful were the chance that should enable him and me to exhibit our neat wit by apt quotations from Heine, De Musset, Boileau, Dumas fils, and the Archbishop of Cambray! He had been at a public school, had Grahame, and might be safely permitted to illustrate his vows by apposite references to Euripides, Sappho, and the Latin Syntax. Nor need he be necessarily ignorant of German, because he is in the army; and it should go hard if we couldn't get matter enough out of Goethe to hit the fashionable taste, and make Mr. Puff welcome this work as a real contribution to literature.

However, in novels as in life—and in this respect we do trace a resemblance between the two things—we have to take a very great deal for granted; and since

there is no doubt that Grahame frequently met Jessie alone, it may safely be assumed that some love-making did take place between them, though, owing to the grave and intelligent nature of the young officer, and the perfect innocence and child-like trustfulness of Jessie, it was not nearly voluptuous, bubbly, throbbing, panting, thrilling, choking, and maddening enough to entitle it to a description in a novel that is meant to circulate freely through the lending libraries, and to be thumbed, pencilled, and devoured in provincial rectories.

Don't think that during those days, when Jessie was holding sweet and secret converse with her sweetheart, that Mr. Andrews was neglecting his passion, or forgetting to prosecute it by every art he was master of. He broke through all idle restraints of etiquette, and called without reference to return visits. Whenever he

had the good fortune to find Jessie in, he, acting upon his clerical friend's suggestion, treated her with grave and dignified politeness, his determination being to make his demeanour atone for the haste of which he had been guilty in expressing his passion.

"She is not to be won by an assault," Mr. Lockfield had said to him jocularly. "You have got an idea in your head that your cousin pleased her. If that be so—consider *how* he pleased her; then gulp down your pride, and set to work to imitate the manner that appears to take her fancy. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri.* Your cousin is very quiet in his ways, talks with a certain degree of thoughtfulness. Copy these things. You have Mrs. Lovel with you now—she as good as told me so the other night. One great difficulty is vanquished in securing her good-will; and now nothing remains for you to do but to

please Miss Marchmont and make her think of you."

Very easy advice to give! But suppose you were to say to a man—"You are very anxious to be Emperor of China, aren't you? Very well, sir, I have overcome your mother's proper scruples on the subject of usurpation, and that difficulty being conquered, all that you have to do is to go to China, take the reigning Bo Hee by the nose, pull him off his throne, and clamber into the gilt arm-chair yourself."—Would that advice help your friend in his ambition to rule over chopsticks and bunions? As much as Mr. Lockfield's advice could help *his* friend to acquire dominion over Jessie's heart.

However, Mr. Andrews was largely gifted with conceit, and the little clergyman really found it no very hard task to persuade him that, if he would only stifle his impatience, let Miss Marchmont see

as much of him as possible, colour his ardent politeness with respectful remorse, talk to her about her papa and France, and not dream of again intruding his love until he had good reason to suppose that a proposal of marriage would not be met with tears and piteous entreaties to go away and leave her alone—a liking for him must inevitably, sooner or later, spring up, and be followed in time by love.

Many and instructive were the stories Mr. Lockfield poured into the young man's attentive ear respecting the capriciousness of Woman, the delight she took in a long wooing, her love of tyrannizing over her own emotions by repressing her feelings for the man whom her feelings—to imitate a popular species of writing—were always yearning to go out and meet.

He told him of Dick Childers, an old college friend, who loved a young lady for three years. All through those dreadfully

long three years Dick met with no encouragement from a single member of the family—not even from the stable-boy. The young lady seemed to hate Dick, outraged his feelings by forfeiting endless promises to dance with him, dodged and escaped his very shadow, was three times in those three years engaged to be married to some other man, and at last drove Dick delirious by sending him a cocked-hat note, in which she informed him that she was ready now to let him marry her.

Poor Dick! poor Andrews, I mean! what sleepless nights that unhappy young man passed! how haggard he grew! what agony he endured when in *her* presence to have to talk like a curate and look like a monk, to have to fold his arms upon his breast when he could have flung them wide open, to have to go away for fear that she should tire of his company, and

so undo what good effects his subdued demeanour and respectful devotion had produced, when he would have given his head to have stopped! What—what have you, O Woman, what magic do you exercise, what secret spells do you contrive, what supernatural agencies assist, to render you so captivating that man will undergo the most intolerable torture of body and mind to win you? Is not life full enough of troubles for him—has he not

The Stock Exchange—
The General Election—
Mines—
The Newspapers' City Articles—
His bosom friend—
Insolvent Nations—
And the Licensing Act

to drive him mad, that Woman must come to fret, and tease, and give him sleepless hours, and torment him with hate—and having Swinburnized him, dispatch him to

submit to a new species of torture at the hands of the tailor and the photographer?

Woman in our hour of ease, indeed! Thou Great Unknown! had man ever an hour of ease in which woman was?

CHAPTER X.

A DREADFUL DISCOVERY.

APRIL had gone, and the day consecrated to, or by, sweeps had come. If ever the human mind had an excuse for being happy, and sneaking out of the shell of trouble which it pleases our Christian spirits to load one another with, it would have been that balmy, lovely day, that first of May, which beamed over the little town of Sandhaven like a benediction and a promise. Mrs. Lovel's garden was draped with leaves, with here and there an early flower lending its spot of colour to the pale green. Across the lane the

trees threw deep shadows, while many birds made the murmur of the wind among the branches festive. The high sun poured its gay splendour upon Mrs. Lovel's pretty house, and flashed upon the windows, and stretched a great golden stream across the parlour carpet, and sparkled in Mrs. Lovel's spectacles and veined the polished needle she was diligently plying with a line of light. But it found no reflection in Mrs. Lovel's face, which, whether through contrast with the lovely day outside, or because her mood happened to be a very solemn one, was uncommonly austere and thoughtful.

Habited in a stiff lace cap, a black silk dress, thin mittens, a smart apron with gaping pockets, she looked not a jot less old fashioned and well-preserved, than on that black winter's night when we first had the happiness to behold her.

But what am I to say of her face? Can I pretend that it still possessed the genial

placidity which gave it its best charm on that night I refer to? Then, indeed, a temporary agitation, begotten by her apprehensions of her niece, tenderly ebbed and flowed over her countenance, but not so vehemently as to cause the spectator to lose sight of the sub-abiding characteristic of ease and peace. But now anxiety would seem to have gained a permanent hold on those respected features. The slight, but habitual contraction of the brow, seemed to mark the possession of a lasting moody agitation. The mouth, unduly depressed, developed with unfair accuracy the lines that were carved about its corners. The firm, vigorous, and resistless concentration of her eyes upon the pinafore she was hemming for Sarah Crutch's child multiplied the wrinkles or crow's feet over against her eye-brows, and thus added to the false impression of years conveyed by her aspect. Now and then her lips moved as

if she were warmly arguing with her needle; often she would pause to turn slowly and gaze at the clock.

The hands of that clock pointed to one: and even as the whirring clapper fell upon the bell, the garden gate was flung hastily open, and Mr. Lockfield walked quickly up to the door. Jane announced him. He followed her, but made no observation to Mrs. Lovel, did not even salute her, until Jane had closed the door and gone away. He then went up to the lady, shook her hand, drew a chair near her and seated himself.

"Mrs. Lovel," said he, huskily, "I don't want to frighten you—I don't want to excite you; but I have seen something this morning, ma'am, that I fear must cause you the utmost grief and consternation."

Mrs. Lovel, who had thrown aside her work on her friend's entrance, turned pale, clasped her hands tightly, and made up her

mind to hear news more dreadful than all the calamities and evils we pray against in the Litany put together.

"I would—I would, Mrs. Lovel," continued Mr. Lockfield in a faltering voice, "that the report I have to make to you had reached your ears through any other lips than mine. The heaviest tax that can be imposed on friendship is to be the bearer of calamitous tidings. Mrs. Lovel, we have all been deceived—your worst apprehensions are realized—the encouragement I gave you to succour and receive the orphan recoils upon me, as if I had been guilty of a malignant suggestion. My poor friend Andrews—my poor Mrs. Lovel—we have all been made fools of; and yet I would have under-written her perfect frankness and honesty for twenty times the worth of my living."

"Will you tell me what is the matter?" said Mrs. Lovel in a deliberate croak,

making wild internal plunges after her nervous system which was scattering in all directions, like a hatful of pieces of paper thrown upon a breeze.

"This morning — not an hour ago — tempted by the brightness of the sun, I went for a walk upon the cliff. Observing our little pier to look very tranquil and seductive, and not having been upon it since the autumn, I made my way thither, walked to the end, and stood for some moments watching the water splashing against the piles. I then returned, but before I reached the steps that led to the sands, my attention was attracted by two figures seated at the foot of a great block of fallen cliff. I gazed very intently, being struck, as you may conceive, by the spectacle of a young lady and gentleman alone on the sands, and was astounded, on raising my glasses, to behold your niece and Mr. Grahame."

"Alone!" shrieked Mrs. Lovel.

"Absolutely, utterly alone!" answered Mr. Lockfield with stern emphasis.

"You are mistaken! I am crazy to listen to you, sir!" cried the poor old woman, grasping both arms of her chair and raising herself some inches off the cushion. "You saw Mr. Grahame with a companion—you recognized him, but not her. Instantly your suspicions fastened upon my niece, and thus you confounded some abandoned creature, the young woman in the confectioner's shop, perhaps, where he lodges, with an innocent girl."

"I wish," responded Mr. Lockfield, warmly, "that we were all as sure of going to heaven, as I am that the young lady who was sitting with Mr. Grahame on the sands was Miss Marchmont."

"I will ask Jessie herself when she comes in," said Mrs. Lovel, with a ghastly look at the clock. "I don't think—I can't

think that she would tell me a falsehood."

"But why won't you believe me?" demanded Mr. Lockfield, with a little passion giving a keenness to his voice. "Are there two Jessie Marchmonts? Don't you think I recognized her hat with the black feather? What other young woman in this town has her peculiar coloured hair? Besides, even if I had not seen her face I might have known it was she; for all along I have had my misgivings as to what could detain Mr. Grahame in Sandhaven, where he is constantly meeting the gentleman he injured and quarrelled with. I know these army men. Their profession is essentially an idle one, a dreary one, that makes no demands whatever upon their minds, and few men have courage enough to busy themselves in honest pursuits, when there is no need for them to do anything but keep themselves clean. Your niece, with an obstinacy pe-

culiar to her sex, has chosen to attach herself to Mr. Grahame whom you don't want, instead of to Mr. Andrews, whom now you would be glad to marry her to. I do say, Mrs. Lovel, that this misfortune is in a great measure owing to you."

Mrs. Lovel held up both hands; her mittens, somehow, made the deprecatory gesture really pathetic.

"I remember the time," the little clergyman went on cruelly, "when I implored you to be civil to Mr. Andrews, to countenance his love for your niece, to welcome him to your house, and never to lose sight of his position and prospects."

"I did welcome him and countenance him," quavered Mrs. Lovel, "and all would have been well, but for this horrid Mr. Grahame!"

"Yes, but had you not rendered Mr. Andrews ridiculous in Miss Marchmont's opinion by resenting his offers of kindness

and snubbing him—I *must* use that expressive word—all would have gone on well, in spite of Mr. Grahame."

"She thought him plain," whimpered Mrs. Lovel, cowed by the clergyman's reproachful, overtopping manner. "He asked her to love him and she wouldn't."

"Because he was too impetuous — he frightened her. I exhorted him—on my bended knees, I was going to say—to have patience, to be cool, to interest her before attempting to win her. But you were always prejudiced against marriage and love-making."

"And so I am still," gasped the old lady, "I think them both horrid, and wish to goodness, I do, that you had never introduced us to Mr. Andrews, for then Jessie wouldn't have known any young men at all, and I might still be enjoying my life instead of longing to be dead!" and she

covered her spectacles with her handkerchief.

"Pray be calm, pray be calm, Mrs. Lovel," exclaimed the clergyman, moved by his old friend's grief. "There are few evils under the sun for which Providence has not supplied us with a remedy. Let us hope this trouble is not among the exceptions. We have yet to ascertain to what degree your niece is in love with Mr. Grahame—and then, have you no influence over her for us to reckon on?"

"Influence, indeed! Do you think if I had any she would dare to meet a young man alone? It is her Popish education, it is those French plays she witnessed," cried the old lady; "it is the dreadful example set her by the immoral people among whom she was reared, that's at the bottom of her wicked behaviour. Don't ask me if I had no suspicions that she sometimes met Mr. Grahame, and conversed with him, in spite of

my command that she should cut him. I had suspicions—but never, never had the courage to question her, as I ought to have done, lest she should shock me with the truth. She has presumed upon my cowardice and——"

"Here she comes," said Mr. Lockfield, looking through the window, and shifting his comfortable posture into a very uneasy one. "I would rather she had not found me here. It looks like tale-bearing;" and he glanced round the room as though in search of a hiding-place.

Mrs. Lovel stiffened herself into an attitude rigid as iron. There was, indeed, something very formidable in the severe expression her face took. Even her spectacles seemed to shine with a lurid light, though this was no doubt the reflection of the sunshine upon the carpet.

Jessie came in, looking very pale, but very determined. She walked to the

table, leaned with her hand upon it, and said to Mr. Lockfield:

"I suppose you have told my aunt that you saw us upon the sands?"

"Certainly—yes; I did see you," stammered Mr. Lockfield, taken aback by this unexpected address.

And then recovering his dignity, with an effort, he added:

"Mrs. Lovel thought I was mistaken; but I had no doubt it was you."

"Do you mean to say that you have been sitting alone with Mr. Grahame on the sands?" exclaimed Mrs. Lovel shrilly.

"Yes, and I am not sorry, aunt, and won't be so hypocritical as to pretend I am."

"Not sorry," shrieked the old lady; "not sorry for committing a dreadful sin, and disobeying my wishes?"

"What dreadful sin have I committed?" answered Jessie, her nostrils dilating, and

looking so mutinous that Mr. Lockfield could scarce credit the transformation.

"Haven't you been alone with Mr. Grahame?"

"Yes; but that isn't a dreadful sin."

"Tell her it is, Mr. Lockfield. Tell her —but, oh! that man has destroyed her conscience. She has lost all knowledge of right and wrong."

"Pray, Mrs. Lovel, restrain yourself—pray talk reasonably," said Mr. Lockfield, really afraid that his old friend was going mad, so wild were the gesticulations of her mittened hands, and so distressing the faces she made. "Don't call Miss Marchmont's indiscretion a dreadful sin, for that kind of exaggeration is more calculated to deaden the moral perception than any action that can be committed. I did see you from the pier," continued he, addressing Jessie, "and I considered it my duty to acquaint Mrs. Lovel with what I saw. I am not

usually a meddler in other people's affairs; but I certainly consider it incumbent upon me to help Mrs. Lovel so far as it lies in my power to point out to you the error you are guilty of in meeting Mr. Grahame clandestinely."

"Error!" burst out Mrs. Lovel, with a wild toss of her head. "Error do you call it? Why——"

"Pray talk composedly," interrupted Mr. Lockfield. "Consider the mischief that must result from the use of intemperate language."

"The mischief is done!" cried Mrs. Lovel. "What worse can happen?"

Jessie fixed her eyes on the table-cloth. I think she must have expected this reception, for she certainly seemed prepared for it.

"You must know, Miss Marchmont, that these meetings are entirely opposed to your aunt's wishes," said Mr. Lockfield.

"I know it, and I am sorry to have pained my aunt," answered Jessie in a low voice; "but I could not cut Mr. Grahame as she wanted me to—he had not offended me."

"Isn't there a medium between cutting a man and sitting alone with him under the cliffs?" cried Mrs. Lovel. "Since you wouldn't cut him—and pray who is he that he shouldn't be cut?—couldn't you have contented yourself with bowing to him?"

"No, because I love him," said Jessie.

"Ha!" exclaimed Mr. Lockfield, turning in his seat; "this is what I feared."

"And, what is more," continued Jessie, looking at her aunt proudly, "I am engaged to be married to him?"

Come, Mr. Phiz, come, Mr. Cruikshank, come quickly, and with your united genius draw me Mrs. Lovel's face: paint the lace cap that seems to be raised a quarter of an inch by

the hair; the lifted hands that with fingers curled with horror appear to be keeping off some ugly spectre; the stupefied astonishment that deadens upon her spectacles, the wrinkles multiplied by the well-arched eyebrows!

"You're joking," says Mr. Lockfield, hoarsely.

"Here is my engaged ring," answered Jessie; and she pulled the bauble out of her pocket, holds it up, and then slips it on the proper finger.

"Mrs. Lovel, I make you my compliments, and heartily wish your niece all the happiness she deserves," says Mr. Lockfield, with so great a depth of sarcasm that it could scarcely have been deeper in Chang the Giant.

"Jessie," screams Mrs. Lovel, "you will send him back that ring this afternoon."

Jessie makes no answer.

"You will take off that ring at once and give it me, and I'll send it back to him with a letter."

Jessie makes no answer.

"Do you defy me, niece?"

"Auntie, I love Mr. Grahame, and mean to marry him. He gave me this ring, and I shall keep it."

"But surely you won't disobey your aunt, Miss Marchmont?" exclaimed Mr. Lockfield.

"I wish, Mr. Lockfield," replied Jessie, the colour rising furiously into her cheeks as she meets the clergyman's eyes, "that you would make my aunt understand I am not wronging her, nor myself, nor anybody, by accepting the love of a gentleman, and not cause her to think me wicked, because it is impossible for me to do everything she wishes."

"I—I don't persuade—I hate meddling," says the clergyman, taken aback a second

time. "I sympathize with her disappointment. I am sorry that you should——"

"I want my aunt's love, but nobody's pity," interrupts Jessie proudly. And then, turning to her aunt, she clasps her hand, and cries piteously:

"Bear with me a little. I could not help loving him. He is going back to India soon, and I shan't see him for a long time, and my heart is ready to break to think of our separation. Don't be cruel to me, aunt. I would do anything in the world you want me to do; but I cannot help loving him. I know what I owe you, and that you have been as a mother to me. Be kind to me in this, as you have been in all else; and let me love him and think of him as my husband, until he comes back to marry me. You don't know him, aunt. If he were not a gentleman, and had a noble heart, could I love him? Could I have met him alone as I have and trusted

myself with him? Don't be against me in this. He will have to leave me soon, and if you are angry with me as well, I shall have more sorrow than I can bear."

All her audacity has gone from her, and the pride that has given her the courage to make her confession, and meet her aunt's eyes; and she stands, a forlorn little maid, with the great tears in her eyes, calling for pity and affection, while she hugs her love to her heart, and finds it none the less sweet for needing protection.

"Oh, Jessie, I can never consent. He is not fit—you don't know each other—he has no means—no principle; you have wofully deceived me!" gasps Mrs. Lovel, struggling with a world of emotion.

"Who says he has no principle?" cries Jessie, dashing the tears from her eyes, and looking at Mr. Lockfield. "Whoever says so is a story-teller!"

"Pray don't think I say so, on my own

authority," says Mr. Lockfield, heartily wishing himself in the calm and security of his study. "I know nothing of Mr. Grahame. He is a perfect stranger to me. I never met him before that night at the Andrewses'."

"It was Mr. Andrews who stated that falsehood!" exclaims Jessie. "He was jealous of his cousin, and tried to injure him by defaming him."

"Very likely, very likely," answers Mr. Lockfield; "though Mr. Andrews should know. But let him defend himself. I am quite a stranger to Mr. Grahame."

And as he speaks, he sees a vision of a very little clergyman sitting in his study, and a great big military man with flashing eyes, and a passionate voice, standing opposite, and demanding a most humiliating apology, or threatening personal violence.

"If Mr. Andrews doesn't know his cousin, who should?" cried Mrs. Lovel, exasperated

by Mr. Lockfield's backward tendency. "You say Mr. Grahame isn't unprincipled, but whose word have you got?"

"I would rather believe anybody than Mr. Andrews," says Jessie.

"To think that you—a mere infant—should dare to engage yourself to a young man without my knowledge or consent! Am I in a dream, or where am I? Why didn't you tell me you were meeting him every day? To be deceived in this manner—boh! boh!" here the poor old woman fell a crying.

"If I had told you I was meeting him, you would have prevented me—and noth—noth—nothing could have prevented me!" warbles Jessie.

Mr. Lockfield, who wanted to get home, wished to have a few minutes' chat with Mrs. Lovel before he left, and hoped Jessie would go and remove her things. He was a really good-natured little man at bottom,

and hated these quarrels and tears and protests and accusations. They had embittered his married life whilst his wife lived, until she grew too nervous to listen to the sound of his voice, and when she died he had certainly hoped that all need of squabbles and hot arguments so far as he was concerned had perished with her. Somehow or other, since Jessie's arrival at Sandhaven he had been led into and had been obliged to listen to more warm words than had escaped or saluted him since the date of his wife's first dreadful nervous attack. Really Mrs. Lovel's apprehensions had not been so ill-founded after all. Hadn't she told him, when she made up her mind to receive her niece, that she had lived out her quiet days, and was prepared for trouble? See, her eyes were red-edged behind her spectacles; worry and perplexity worked in her elderly countenance; her old serenity was gone; there it

was, under that young girl's feet yonder —that pretty girl, with the tearful eyes, and pale face, and gold-coloured hair, whose heart was throbbing with a love her aunt never, never, never could approve or sanction.

"What's to be done?" says the old lady to Mr. Lockfield.

"I don't think we have any right to keep Miss Marchmont standing there, nor to say more to her than we have said," answers Mr. Lockfield. "I am quite sure of one thing, that Miss Marchmont has too good a heart and too strict a conscience to oppose her aunt's wishes, after she has reflected upon the pain and grief her disobedience must occasion the best of women and the truest of friends."

"Mr. Lockfield, I would cut off my arm to please my aunt, but I can't do *everything* she wants," sobs Jessie.

The wild and mingled emotions that had

agitated Mrs. Lovel's soul from the moment of the clergyman's entrance had by this time pretty nearly exhausted her, so that she made no answer to Jessie's observation, but fixed a frowning and frigid gaze upon her mother's portrait over the sofa.

Whereupon Jessie stealing a shy glance at her, walked to the door.

"I hate these scenes," says Mr. Lockfield when the girl had gone; "I hate to be a spectator of them. Don't think me indelicate for remaining. I should have gone away at once had I not been detained by a remark your niece let fall, through which, it strikes me, I can see daylight enough to make me hope that if we will but exercise a little patience, we may get out of this thorny business without much laceration of mind."

Mrs. Lovel heaves a deep sigh. No cheering remark that Mr. Lockfield can utter can at that moment represent life to

her as other than an inextricable complication of disappointment and trouble.

"I suppose you heard her say that Mr. Grahame is shortly returning to India?"

"Yes," groans the old lady, with melancholy apathy.

"And of course you know what that means?" says Mr. Lockfield, turning his little black eyes upon her.

"It means that he is returning to India," responds Mrs. Lovel, dully.

"It means," says Mr. Lockfield, earnestly, "that he will forget her."

The old lady shakes her head.

"And I say *yes*," cries the little man, with energy.

"I can't believe anything—I can't hope for anything," quavers Mrs. Lovel. "There is such a singing going on in my ears that I feel stone deaf. Oh, if I had only had the courage to tell Mr. Malcolmson that I was too old—too old to undertake the

fatigue and anxiety of rearing a relative."

"Mrs. Lovel, I have lived a good number of years in this world, and my experience in the matter of love is this: that of all the passions it is the very last upon which we can have the least reliance. This is true even of lovers possessed of stability of character, of firm resolutions, ma'am, and powerful wills; but how much more true is it of military men, who are notorious for their insincerity, for their contempt of vows and promises, for viewing love-making as a mere pastime with which to diversify the more fatiguing labours of the billiard-table and the mess-room. If your trouble were mine," the little clergyman exclaims with such expansion of cheeriness that the room seems the brighter for the smile that envelops his face, "I would let it fall from me as I do this handkerchief," and down drops his handkerchief, which he instantly picks up

again and shakes. "I would stake my testimonial salver against a bad sixpence that Mr. Grahame is no more in earnest in his love-making than I should be if I were to catch Mr. Minto by the hand and congratulate him upon the improvements he has introduced into the church-service. Mr. Grahame will sail away to India, and in all human probability will have totally forgotten all about your niece before his vessel sights the land."

"Oh, you are representing him as a most dreadful man!"

"As a young man, Mrs. Lovel, as a young officer, as a member of a profession which, through the stupidity of the ladies, considers itself privileged to fool the sex. And *let* him be a dreadful man; don't we want him to be dreadful? Don't we want him to forget her?"

"I can hardly think. My ears are sing-

ing to that degree that the room seems filled with boiling kettles."

"That sensation will soon pass away," says Mr. Lockfield. "Here we are all in darkness, and I want you to see the light that comes streaming in, as it were, through a chink in your niece's language. Mr. Grahame must return to India, that's certain; I never thought of that when Miss Marchmont first paralyzed us with the news of her engagement. Engagement, indeed! I tell you, Mrs. Lovel, that it is the military nature to forget. This love-story of Grahame's will serve him for a mess-room joke, and if it serves any other purpose than that I'll eat my head."

"What would I give to be present should he *dare* to make a joke of my niece!" cries the old lady.

"Your niece must go through it like everybody else," says Mr. Lockfield, with a sigh. "Who hasn't been in love, been

made miserable and wise by it? What woman, what man, hasn't some little dark closet in their heart where, if you could take a peep, you might see mouldy bundles of love-letters with green tear-spots upon them, locks of hair, a miniature, maybe a bit of ribbon? We keep those closet doors locked; and when sometimes we steal a look at the shreds and tatters of passion lying in the gloom, we scarce recognize them for the dust. Are we any the worse for those soiled, dusty memories? My idea is, a girl ought to be in love twice in her life: once with the man she doesn't marry, and once with the man she does. Emotion must be educated; and my experience is, that the best wives are the women who have received the most attention from men before they finally bestowed their hands."

From lay lips this would have been as heretical a creed as Mrs. Lovel could have

listened to without grappling with her smelling-bottle. Coming from a clergyman, she received it in restless silence.

"It is with no spirit of exultation," continues Mr. Lockfield, "that I anticipate neglect and forgetfulness for your niece at the hands of Mr. Grahame; but I am very sanguine as to the effect of the lesson her trial will read her."

"But how do you know that Mr. Grahame *will* forget her?"

"Oh, Mrs. Lovel, there can be no doubt," answers Mr. Lockfield, wagging his head and smiling knowingly. "We are not dealing here with a civilian, with a man whose business detains him in Sandhaven or in England. When Mr. Grahame reaches India he will have other things to attend to than thinking about your niece; meanwhile you have her here to reason with, and ultimately to persuade into your views. And then, is Mr. Andrews to be no power?

Is he to have no influence in teaching her how to forget the man who, we may make up our minds, will forget her? Come, come, keep your temper and your patience, and wait until Mr. Grahame is fairly out of the country. Don't say too much to her; nay, let her meet him and have her own way, or you'll make her desperate, and perhaps cause her to go off to India with him."

"I do wish this singing in my ears would cease; it distracts me, and prevents me mastering your meaning. Do you say that if I prohibit her from meeting this young man she will go off to India with him?"

"I say that your prohibition would not prevent her from meeting him as often as she chooses; and I also say, that if you tackle her indiscretion too severely, you will probably end in driving her into an elopement."

"Ha! what trouble have I brought upon

myself! But would you have me sanction these meetings?"

"Say nothing—leave her alone; ascertain when he leaves, and keep quiet. You can do no good by losing your temper, by scolding, by threatening her. Cork up your indignation, and act like an impassive spectator."

"But it is my duty to write to Mr. Grahame and *command* him never to speak to my niece again," cries the old lady.

"What! command! My dear friend, you can't command love; you can't command the sea or the wind. You might as well address a letter to the man in the moon and request him not to shine so brightly into your room of nights, as it keeps you awake. Your policy should be to prevent more mischief from happening than has already happened. What is done is done. Don't compel them to do what is as yet undone."

"I have a great mind to send her back to her friends at La Force."

"And break Mr. Andrews's heart, poor young man! and destroy her chances for securing wealth and social station! Mrs. Lovel, I entreat you to be calm and patient and watchful. Things will turn out as you want them if you will only give them time. But, depend upon it, you may kick yourself into a fever, and not make the minutes roll quicker."

"Then what am I to do?" exclaims Mrs. Lovel, hopelessly and from very weariness of spirit willing to accept whatever support the clergyman could give her.

"Keep perfectly quiet, and let your niece have her own way until I tell you that Grahame has gone and that we are all out of danger."

"If I must, I must."

"Until Mr. Grahame has left I will advise Mr. Andrews not to intrude upon you.

I suppose now I may safely tell him that you are as wishful as he to see Miss Marchmont his wife."

"Say nothing—say nothing, and ask me no questions whilst my head sings like this. I will take any advice you may give me, but I can't suggest. My judgment is gone—I am miserably upset."

END OF VOL. II.

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